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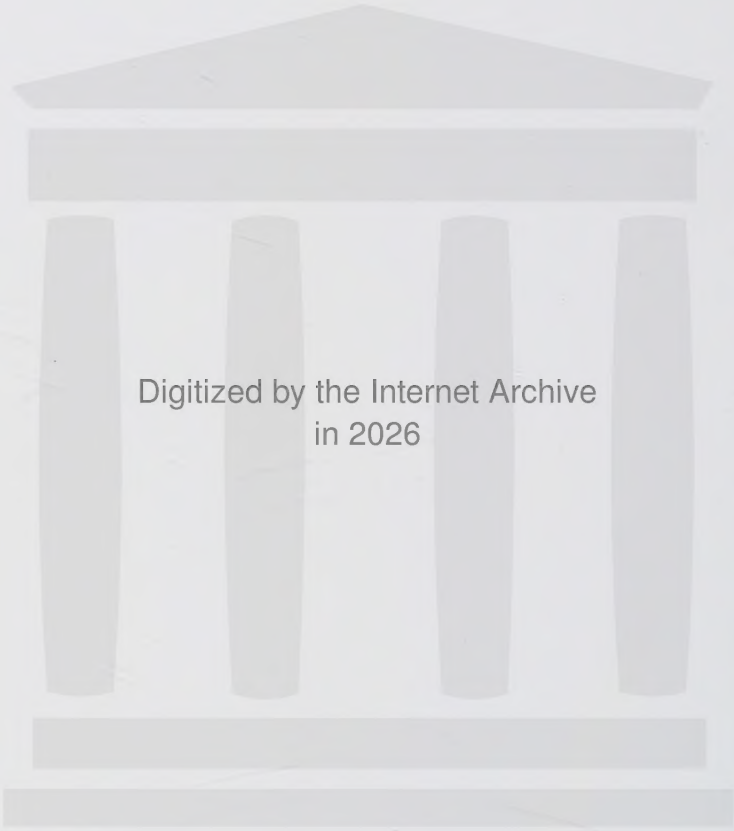
The Story of Nell Gwyn

Peter Cunningham, F.S.A.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THE

STORY OF NELL GWYN

AND THE

SAYINGS OF CHARLES THE SECOND.

RELATED AND COLLECTED

BY

PETER CUNNINGHAM, F.S.A.

WITH A COMPLETE INDEX TO THE PERSONAGES MENTIONED,
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TO THE ENGLISH EDITION OF 1852.

THE following story was originally published in "The Gentleman's Magazine," for the year 1851, and now appears as a separate publication for the first time: corrected throughout and enlarged with such new matter as my own diligence, and the kindness of friends, has enabled me to bring together. It must be read as a serious truth, not as a fiction—as a biography, not as a romance. It has no other foundation than truth, and will be heard of hereafter only as it adheres to history.

PETER CUNNINGHAM.

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The Story of Nell Gwyn.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction—Birth and birth-place—Horoscope of her nativity—Condition in life of her Father—Her account of her early days—Becomes an orange-girl at the theatre—Effects of the Restoration—Revival of the stage—Two theatres allowed—Scenery and dresses—Principal actors and actresses—Duties and importance of the orange-girls.

Dr. Thomas Tenison, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, preached the funeral sermon of Nell Gwyn. What so good a man did not think an unfit subject for a sermon, will not be thought, I trust, an unfit subject for a book; for the life that was spent remissly may yet convey a moral, like that of Jane Shore, which the wise and virtuous Sir Thomas More has told so touchingly in his History of King Richard III.

The English people have always entertained a peculiar liking for Nell Gwyn. There is a sort of indulgence towards her not generally conceded to any other woman of her class. Thousands are attracted by her name, they know not why, and do not stay to inquire. It is the popular impression that, with all her failings, she had a generous as well as a tender heart; that when raised from poverty, she reserved her wealth for others rather than herself; and that the influence she possessed was often exercised for good objects, and never abused. Contrasted with others in a far superior rank in life, and tried by fewer temptations, there is much that marks and removes her

from the common herd. The many have no sympathy, nor should they have any, for Barbara Palmer, Louise de Quérouaille, or Erengard de Schulenberg; but for Nell Gwyn, "pretty witty Nell," there is a tolerant and kindly regard, which the following pages are designed to illustrate rather than extend.

The Coal Yard in Drury Lane, a low alley, the last on the east or city side of the lane, and still known by that name, was, it is said, the place of Nell Gwyn's birth. They show, however, in Pipe Lane, in the parish of St. John, in the city of Hereford, a small house of brick and timber, now little better than a hovel, in which, according to local tradition, she was born. That the Coal Yard was the place of her birth was stated in print as early as 1721; and this was copied by Oldys, a curious inquirer into literary and dramatic matters, in the account of her life which he wrote for Curll.* The Hereford story too is of some standing; but there is little else I am afraid to support it. The capital of the cider country, however, does not want even Nell Gwyn to add to its theatrical reputation; in the same cathedral city which claims to be the birth-place of the best known English actress, was born, seventy years later, David Garrick, the greatest and best known actor we have yet had.†

The horoscope of the nativity of Eleanor Gwyn, the work perhaps of Lilly, is still to be seen among Ashmole's papers in the Museum at Oxford. She was born, it states, on the 2nd of February, 1650. The horoscope shows what stars were supposed to be in the ascendant at the time; and such of my readers as do not disdain a study which engaged the attention

* Curll's History of the English Stage, 8vo, 1741, p. 111.

† "When I went first to Oxford, Dr. John Ireland, an antiquary, assured me that Nelly was born in Oxford. He named the parish, but I have forgot it. It is certain that two of her son's titles—Headington and Burford—were taken from Oxfordshire localities."—MS. note by the late Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, the antiquary and genealogist. Oddly enough, one of Nelly's grandsons died Bishop of Hereford.

and ruled not unfrequently the actions of vigorous-minded men, like Lord Chancellor Shaftesbury and the poet Dryden, may find more meaning in the state of the heavenly bodies at her birth than I have as yet succeeded in detecting.

Of the early history of Nell, and of the rank in life of her parents, very little is known with certainty. Her father, it is said, was Captain Thomas Gwyn, of an ancient family in Wales.* The name certainly is of Welch extraction, and the descent may be admitted without adopting the captaincy; for by other hitherto received accounts her father was a fruiterer in Covent Garden. She speaks in her will of her "kinsman Cholmley," and the satires of the time have pilloried a cousin, raised by her influence to an ensigncy from the menial office of one of the black guard employed in carrying coals at Court. Her mother, who lived to see her daughter a favourite of the King, and the mother by him of at least two children, was accidentally drowned in a pond near the Neat Houses at Chelsea. Her Christian name was Eleanor, but her maiden name is unknown.

Whatever the station in life to which her pedigree might have entitled her, her bringing up, by her own account, was humble enough. "Mrs. Pierce tells me," says Pepys, "that the two Marshalls at the King's House are Stephen Marshall's, the great Presbyterian's daughters: and that Nelly and Beck Marshall falling out the other day, the latter called the other my Lord Buckhurst's mistress. Nell answered her, 'I was but one man's mistress, though I was brought up in a brothel to fill strong water† to the gentlemen; and you are a mistress to three or four, though a Presbyter's praying daughter.'" This, for a girl of any virtue or beauty, was indeed a bad bringing-up.

* MS. note by Van Bossen, made in 1682, and quoted at length in a subsequent page.

† Among Mr. Akerman's "Tradesmen's Tokens current in London, 1648 to 1672," is that of "a strong water man."

The Coal Yard, infamous in later years as one of the residences of Jonathan Wild, was the next turning in the same street to the still more notorious and fashionably inhabited Lewknor Lane, where young creatures were inveigled to infamy, and sent dressed as orange-girls to sell fruit and attract attention in the adjoining theatres.

That this was Nelly's next calling we have the testimony of the Duchess of Portsmouth and the authority of a poem of the time, attributed to Lord Rochester:

> But first the basket her fair arm did suit,
> Laden with pippins and Hesperian fruit;
> This first step raised, to the wondering pit she sold
> The lovely fruit smiling with streaks of gold.

Nell was now an orange-girl, holding her basket of fruit covered with vine-leaves in the pit of the King's Theatre, and taking her stand with her fellow fruit-women in the front-row of the pit, with her back to the stage.* The cry of the fruit-women, which Shadwell has preserved, "Oranges! will you have any oranges?"† must have come clear and invitingly from the lips of Nell Gwyn.

She was ten years of age at the restoration of King Charles II., in 1660. She was old enough, therefore, to have noticed the extraordinary change which the return of royalty effected in the manners, customs, feelings, and even conversation of the bulk of the people. The strict observance of the Sabbath was no longer rigidly enforced. Sir Charles Sedley and the Duke of Buckingham rode in their coaches on a Sunday, and the barber and the shoe-black shaved beards and cleaned boots on the same day, without the overseers of the poor of the parish inflicting fines on them for such (as they were then thought) unseemly breaches of the Sabbath. Maypoles were once more

* T. Shadwell's Works, iii. 173.

† Davies's Dramatic Miscellanies, iii. 464.

erected on spots endeared by old associations, and the people again danced their old dances around them. The Cavalier restored the royal insignia on his fire-place to its old position; the King's Head, the Duke's Head, and the Crown were once more favourite signs by which taverns were distinguished; drinking of healths and deep potations, with all their Low-Country honours and observances, were again in vogue. Oughtred, the mathematician, died of joy, and Urquhart, the translator of Rabelais, of laughter, at hearing of the enthusiasm of the English to "welcome home old Rowley."* The King's health—

Here's a health unto his Majesty, with a fa, la, la, †

was made the pretext for the worst excesses, and irreligion and indecency were thought to secure conversation against a suspicion of disloyalty and fanaticism. Even the common people took to gay-coloured dresses as before; and a freedom of spirits, rendered familiar by early recollection, and only half subdued by Presbyterian persecution, was confirmed by a licence of tongue which the young men about court had acquired while in exile with their sovereign.

* "Welcome home, old Rowley," is the name of the well-known Scottish tune called "Had away frae me, Donald." See Johnson's Scott's Musical Museum, iv. 318.

† One of the seven "Choice New English Ayres" in Songs and Fancies in three, four, five parts, both apt for the Voices and Viols, with a brief Introduction to Musick, as taught in the Musick-School of Aberdeen, third Edition, enlarged, Aberdeen by Jo. Forbes, 1682, is—

"Here's a health unto his Majesty, with a fa, la, la.
Conversion to his enemies, with a fa, la, la.
And he that will not pledge his health,
I wish him neither wit nor wealth,
Nor yet a rope to hang himself.

With a fa, la, la, la,
With a fa, la," &c.

The music appears to have been the composition of "Mr. John Savile." Shadwell refers to the song, Works, ii. 268; iii. 52.

Not the least striking effect of the restoration of the King was the revival of the English theatres. They had been closed and the players silenced for three-and-twenty years, and in that space a new generation had arisen, to whom the entertainments of the stage were known but by name. The theatres were now re-opened, and with every advantage which stage properties, new and improved scenery, and the costliest dresses, could lend to help them forward. But there were other advantages equally new, and of still greater importance, but for which the name of Eleanor Gwyn would in all likelihood never have reached us.

From the earliest epoch of the stage in England till the theatres were silenced at the outbreak of the Civil War, female characters had invariably been played by men, and during the same brilliant period of our dramatic history there is but one instance of a sovereign witnessing a performance at a public theatre. Henrietta Maria, though so great a favourer of theatrical exhibitions, was present once, and once only, at the theatre in the Blackfriars. The plays of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson,

Which so did take Eliza and our James,

were invariably seen by those sovereigns, as afterwards by Charles I., in the halls, banqueting houses, and cockpits attached to their palaces. With the Restoration came women on the stage, and the King and Queen, the Dukes of York and Buckingham, the chief courtiers, and the maids of honour, were among the constant frequenters of the public theatres.

Great interest was used at the Restoration for the erection of new theatres in London, but the King, acting it is thought on the advice of Clarendon, who wished to stem at all points the flood of idle gaiety and dissipation, would not allow of more than two—the King's Theatre, under the control of Thomas Killigrew, and the Duke's Theatre (so called in compliment to his brother, the Duke of York), under the direction of Sir

William Davenant. Better men for the purpose could not have been chosen. Killigrew was one of the grooms of the bed-chamber to the King, a well-known wit at court and a dramatist himself; and Davenant, who filled the office of Poet Laureate in the household of the King, as he had done before to his father, King Charles I., had been a successful writer for the stage, while Ben Jonson and Massinger were still alive. The royal brothers patronised both houses with equal earnestness, and the patentees vied with each other in catering successfully for the public amusement.

The King's Theatre, or "The Theatre," as it was commonly called, stood in Drury Lane, on the site of the present building, and was the first theatre, as the present is the fourth, erected on the site. It was small, with few pretensions to architectural beauty, and was first opened on the 8th of April, 1663, when Nell was a girl of thirteen. The chief entrance was in Little Russell Street, not as now in Brydges Street. The stage was lighted with wax candles, on brass censers or cressets. The pit lay open to the weather for the sake of light, but was subsequently covered in with a glazed cupola, which however only imperfectly protected the audience, so that in stormy weather the house was thrown into disorder, and the people in the pit were fain to rise.

The Duke's Theatre, commonly called "The Opera," from the nature of its performances, stood at the back of what is now the Royal College of Surgeons in Portugal Row, on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was originally a tennis-court, and, like its rival, was run up hurriedly to meet the wants of the age. The interior arrangements and accommodations were much the same as at Killigrew's house.

The company at the King's Theatre included, among the actors, at the first opening of the house, Theophilus Bird, Charles Hart, Michael Mohun, John Lacy, Nicholas Burt, William Cart-

wright, William Wintershall, Walter Clun, Robert Shatterell, and Edward Kynaston; and Mrs. Corey, Mrs. Ann Marshall, Mrs. Rebecca Marshall, Mrs. Eastland, Mrs. Weaver, Mrs. Uphill, Mrs. Knep, and Mrs. Hughes, were among the female performers. Joe Haines, the low comedian, and Cardell Goodman, the lover of the Duchess of Cleveland, were subsequent accessions to the troop; and so also were Mrs. Boutell and "Mrs. Ellen Gwyn."

Bird belonged to the former race of actors, and did not long survive the Restoration. Hart and Clun had been bred up as boys at the Blackfriars to act women's parts. Hart, who had served as a captain in the King's army, rose to the summit of his profession, but Clun was unfortunately killed while his reputation was still on the increase. Mohun had played at the Cockpit before the Civil Wars, and had served as a captain under the King, and afterwards in the same capacity in Flanders, where he received the pay of a major; he was famous in Iago and Cassius. Lacy, a native of Yorkshire, was the Irish Johnstone and Tyrone Power of his time. Burt, who had been a boy first under Shank at the Blackfriars, and then under Beeston at the Cockpit, was famous before the Civil Wars for the part of Clariana in Shirley's play of Love's Cruelty, and after the Restoration equally famous as Othello. Cartwright and Wintershall had belonged to the private house in Salisbury Court. Cartwright won great renown in Falstaff, and as one of the two kings of Brentford in the farce of The Rehearsal. Wintershall played Master Slender, for which Dennis the critic commends him highly, and was celebrated for his Cokes in Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair. Shatterell had been quarter-master in Sir Robert Dallison's regiment of horse,—the same in which Hart had been a lieutenant and Burt a cornet. Kynaston acquired especial favour in female parts, for which, indeed, he continued celebrated long after the introduction of women on the stage.

Such were the actors at the King's House when Nell Gwyn joined the company.

Mrs. Corey (the name Miss had then an improper meaning, and the women though single were called Mistresses)* played Abigail, in the Scornful Lady of Beaumont and Fletcher; Sempronia, in Jonson's Catiline; and was the original Widow Blackacre in Wycherley's Plain Dealer;—Pepys calls her Doll Common. The two Marshalls, Ann and Rebecca (to whom I have already had occasion to refer), were the younger daughters of the well-known Stephen Marshall, the Presbyterian divine, who preached the sermon at the funeral of John Pym. Mrs. Uphill was first the mistress and then the wife of Sir Robert Howard, the poet. Mrs. Knep was the wife of a Smithfield horsedealer, and the Mistress of Pepys. Mrs. Hughes, better known as Peg, was the mistress of Prince Rupert, by whom she had a daughter; and Mrs. Boutell was famous for playing Statira to Mrs. Barry's Roxana, in Lee's impressive tragedy of Alexander the Great. Such were the actresses when Nell came among them.

Among the actors at the Duke's were Thomas Betterton, the rival of Burbage and Garrick in the well-earned greatness of his reputation, and the last survivor of the old school of actors; Joseph Harris, the friend of Pepys, originally a seal-cutter, and famous for acting Romeo, Wolsey, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek; William Smith, a barrister of Gray's Inn, celebrated as Zanga in Lord Orrery's Mustapha; Samuel Sandford, called by King Charles II. the best representative of a villain in the world, and praised both by Langbaine and Steele for his excellence in his art; James Nokes, originally a toyman in Cornhill, famous for playing Sir Nicholas Cully in Etherege's Love in a Tub, for his bawling fops, and for his "good company;" Cave Under-

* The first unmarried actress who had Miss before her name on a playbill was Miss Cross, the original Miss Hoyden in Vanbrugh's Relapse.

hill, clever as Cutter in Cowley's comedy, and as the grave-digger in Hamlet, called by Steele "honest Cave Underhill;" and Matthew Medbourne, a useful actor in parts not requiring any great excellence. The women were, Elizabeth Davenport, the first Roxolana in the Siege of Rhodes, snatched from the stage to become the mistress of the twentieth and last Earl of Oxford of the noble family of Vere; Mary Saundersen, famous as Queen Katharine and Juliet, afterwards the wife of the great Betterton; Mary or Moll Davis, excellent in singing and dancing,—afterwards the mistress of Charles II.; Mrs. Long, the mistress of the Duke of Richmond,* celebrated for the elegance of her appearance in men's clothes; Mrs. Norris, the mother of Jubilee Dicky; Mrs. Holden, daughter of a bookseller to whom Betterton had been bound apprentice; and Mrs. Jennings and Mrs. Johnson, both taken from the stage by gallants of the town,—the former but little known as an actress, the latter celebrated as a dancer and for her Carolina in Shadwell's comedy of Epsom Wells.

Such were the performers at the Duke's House. Anthony Leigh and Mrs. Barry, both brought out at the same theatre, were accessions after Davenant's death, and, as I see reason to believe, after Nell Gwyn had ceased to be connected with the stage.

The dresses at both houses were magnificent and costly, but little or no attention was paid to costume. The King, the Queen, the Duke, and several of the richer nobility, gave their coronation suits to the actors, and on extraordinary occasions a play was equipped at the expense of the King. Old court dresses were contributed by the gentry, and birthday suits continued to be presented as late as the reign of George II. The scenery at the Duke's House was superior to the King's, for Davenant, who introduced the opera among us, introduced us

* MS. note by Isaac Reed, in his copy of Downes's Roscius Anglicanus.

at the same time to local and expensive scenery. Battles were no longer represented

> With four or five most vile and ragged foils,

or coronations by a crown taken from a deal table by a single attendant.

The old stock plays were divided by the two companies. Killigrew had Othello, Julius Cæsar, Henry the Fourth, The Merry Wives of Windsor, A Midsummer Night's Dream; four of Ben Jonson's plays—The Alchemist, The Fox, The Silent Woman, and Catiline; and the best of Beaumont and Fletcher's —A King and No King, The Humorous Lieutenant, Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, The Maid's Tragedy, Rollo, The Elder Brother, Philaster, and The Scornful Lady; with Massinger's Virgin Martyr and Shirley's Traitor. Davenant played Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Henry the Eighth, Twelfth Night, and The Tempest; Webster's Duchess of Malfi and Mad Lover; Middleton's Young Changeling; Fletcher's Loyal Subject and Mad Lover; and Massinger's Bondman.

The new plays at the King's House were contributed by Sir Robert Howard, Sir Charles Sedley, Major Porter, Killigrew himself, Dryden, and Nat Lee: at the Duke's House by Davenant, Cowley, Etherege, Lord Orrery, and others. The new tragedies were principally in rhyme. At the first performance of a new comedy ladies seldom attended, or, if at all, in masks —such was the studied indecency of the art of that period.

> The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
> Nor wished for Jonson's art or Shakspeare's flame;
> Themselves they studied—as they felt they writ—
> Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.

The performances commenced at three.* It was usual,

* Plays began at one in Shakspeare's time, at three in Dryden's, at four in Congreve's. In 1696 the hour was four.

therefore, to dine beforehand, and when the play was over to adjourn to the Mulberry Garden, to Vauxhall, or some other place of public entertainment—

> Thither run,
> Some to undo, and some to be undone.

The prices of admission were, boxes four shillings, pit two-and-sixpence, middle gallery eighteen-pence, upper gallery one shilling. The ladies in the pit wore vizards or masks. The middle gallery was long the favourite resort of Mr. and Mrs. Pepys.

The upper gallery, as at present, was attended by the poorest and the noisiest. Servants in livery were admitted as soon as the fifth act commenced.

With the orange-girls (who stood as we have seen in the pit with their back to the stage) the beaux about town were accustomed to break their jests;* and that the language employed was not of the most delicate description, we may gather from the dialogue of Dorimant, in Etherege's comedy of Sir Fopling Flutter.

The mistress or superior of the girls was familiarly known as Orange Moll, and filled the same sort of office in the theatre that the mother of the maids occupied at court among the maids of honour. Both Sir William Penn and Pepys would occasionally have "a great deal of discourse" with Orange Moll; and Mrs. Knep, the actress, when in want of Pepys, sent Moll to the Clerk of the Acts with the welcome message. To higgle about the price of the fruit was thought beneath the character of a gentleman. "The next step," says the Young Gallant's Academy, "is to give a turn to the China orange wench, and give her her own rate for her oranges, (for 'tis below a gentleman to stand haggling like a citizen's wife,) and then to present

* Prologue to Lord Rochester's Valentinian. T. Shadwell's Works, i. 199.

the fairest to the next vizard mask." * Pepys, when challenged in the pit for the price of twelve oranges which the orange-woman said he owed her, but which he says was wholly untrue, was not content with denying the debt, "but for quiet bought four shillings' worth of oranges from her at sixpence a-piece." † This was a high price, but the Clerk of the Acts was true to the directions in the Gallant's Academy.

* The Young Gallant's Academy, or Directions how he should behave in all places and company. By Sam. Overcome, 1674.

† Half-Crown my Play, Sixpence my Orange cost.

Prologue to Mrs. Behn's Young King, 1698.

Nor furiously laid Orange-Wench a-board
For asking what in fruit and love you'd scor'd.

Butler, a Panegyric on Sir John Denham.

When trading grows scant, they join all their forces together, and make up one grand show, and admit the cut-purse and ballad-singer to trade under them, as orange-women do at a Playhouse.

Butler, Character of a Jugler.

Mr. Vain.—I can't imagine how I first came to be of this humour, unless 'twere hearing the orange-wenches talk of ladies and their gallants. So I began to think I had no way of being in the fashion, but bragging of mistresses.

Hon. James Howard, the English Monsieur, p. 4, 4*to*, 1674.

Mrs. Crafty.—This life of mine can last no longer than my beauty, and though 'tis pleasant now, I want nothing whilst I am Mr. Welbred's mistress,—yet, if his mind should change, I might e'en sell oranges for my living, and he not buy one of me to relieve me. *Ibid. p.* 10.

She outdoes a playhouse orange-woman for the politick management of a bawdy intrigue.

Tunbridge Wells, a Comedy, 4*to*, 1678.

In former times, a play of humour, or with a good plot, could certainly please; but now a poet must find out a third way, and adapt his scenes and story to the genius of the critic, if he'd have it pass; he'll have nothing to do with your dull Spanish plot, for whilst he's rallying with the orange-wench, the business of the act gets quite out of his head, and then 'tis "Damme, what stuff's this?" he sees neither head nor tail to't.

D'Urfey, Preface to the Banditti, 4*to*, 1686.

The noble peer may to the play repair,
Court the pert damsel with her China-ware—
Nay marry her—if he please—no one will care.

D'Urfey, Prologue to a Fool's Preferment, 4*to*, 1688.

The orange-miss that here cajoles the Duke
May sell her rotten ware without rebuke.

D'Urfey, Prologue to Don Quixote, Part I., 4*to*, 1694.

CHAPTER II.

Pepys introduces us to Nelly—Character of Pepys—Nelly at the Duke's Theatre—Who was Duncan?—Nell's parts as Lady Wealthy, Enanthe, and Florimel—Charles Hart—Nell's lodgings in Drury Lane—Description of Drury Lane in the reign of Charles II.—The May-pole in the Strand—Nell and Lord Buckhurst—Position in society of Actors and Actresses—Character of Lord Buckhurst—Nelly at Epsom.

Our earliest introduction to Nell Gwyn we owe to Pepys. This precise and lively diarist (who makes us live in his own circle of amusements, by the truth and quaintness of his descriptions), was a constant play-goer. To see and to be seen, when the work of his office was over, were the leading objects of his thoughts. Few novelties escaped him, for he never allowed his love of money to interfere with the gratification of his wishes. His situation, as Clerk of the Acts, in the Navy-office, while the Duke of York was Lord High Admiral, gave him a taste for the entertainments which his master enjoyed. He loved to be found wherever the King and his brother were. He was fond of music, could prick down a few notes for himself, and when his portrait was painted by Hales, was drawn holding in his hand the music which he had composed for a favourite passage in the Siege of Rhodes.* He was known to many of the players, and often asked them to dinner,—now and then not much to the satis-

* This hitherto unengraved portrait was bought by me at the sale, in 1848, of the pictures, &c., of the family of Pepys Cockerell. It was called by the auctioneer "portrait of a Musician," but is unquestionably the picture referred to by Pepys in the following passages of his Diary:—

"1666, March 17. To Hales's, and paid him £14 for the picture and £1 5s. for the frame. This day I began to sit, and he will make me, I think, a very fine picture. He

faction, as he tells us, of his wife. Mrs. Knep, of the King's House, and Joseph Harris of the Duke's (to both of whom I have already introduced the reader) were two of his especial favourites. The gossip and scandal of the green-room of Drury Lane and Lincoln's-Inn-Fields were in this way known to him, and what he failed to obtain behind the scenes he would learn from the orange-women of both houses.

Nell was in her sixteenth, and Mr. Pepys in his thirty-fourth year, when, on Monday, the 3rd of April, 1665, they would appear to have seen one another for the first time. They met at the Duke's Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields during the performance of Mustapha, a tragedy, by the Earl of Orrery, in which Betterton played the part of Solyman, Harris that of Mustapha, and Mrs. or Miss Davis that of the Queen of Hungaria. Great care had been taken to produce this now long-forgotten tragedy with the utmost magnificence. All the parts were newly clothed, and new scenes had been painted expressly for it. Yet we are told by Pepys that "all the pleasure of the play" was in the circumstance that the King and my Lady Castlemaine were there, and that he *sat next* to "pretty witty Nell at the King's House" and to the younger Marshall, another actress at the same theatre—a circumstance, he adds, with his usual quaint honesty of remark, "which pleased me mightily." Yet the play was a good one in Pepys's eyes. Nine months later he calls it "a most excellent play;" and when he saw it again, after an interval of more than two years,

promises it shall be as good as my wife's, and I sit to have it full of shadows, and do almost break my neck looking over my shoulder to make the posture for him to work by.

"March 30. To Hales's and there sat till almost quite dark upon working my gowne, which I hired to be drawn in; an Indian gowne.

"April 11. To Hales's, where there was nothing found to be done more to my picture, but the musique, which now pleases me mightily, it being painted true."

See also The Athenæum for 1848. Lord Braybrooke (Pepys, vol. iii. p. 178) doubts the likeness, but admits that the portrait answers the description.

he describes it as one he liked better the more he saw it:—'a most admirable poem and bravely acted."* His after entries therefore more than confirm the truth of his earlier impressions. The real pleasure of the play, however, was that he sat by the side of "pretty witty Nell," whose foot has been described as the least of any woman's in England,† and to Rebecca Marshall, whose handsome hand he has carefully noted in another entry in his Diary. The small feet peeping occasionally from beneath a petticoat, and the handsome hands raised now and then to check a vagrant curl, must have held the Clerk of the Acts in a continual state of torture.

There was a novelty that night which had doubtless drawn Nell and old Stephen Marshall's younger daughter to the pit of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Mrs. Betterton was playing Roxolana in place of the elder Davenport, and Moll Davis had begun to attract the notice of some of the courtiers, and, as it was whispered, of the King himself. The old Roxolana had become the mistress of the twentieth and last Earl of the great race of Vere; and Nell—while she reflected on what she may have thought to have been the good fortune of her fellow actress—might have had her envy appeased could she have foreseen that she should give birth to a son (the mother an orange-girl, the father the King of England) destined to obtain a dukedom in her own lifetime, and afterwards to marry the heiress of the very earl who had taken the old Roxolana from a rival stage—first to deceive and afterwards to desert her.

Nell was indebted, there is reason to believe, for her introduction to the stage, or at least to another condition in life, to a person whose name is variously written as Duncan and as Dungan. Oldys, who calls him Duncan, had heard that he was a merchant, and that he had taken a fancy to her from her smart wit, fine shape, and the smallness of her feet. The information

* Pepys, Sept. 4, 1667.

† Oldys in Curll's History of the Stage, p. 111.

of Oldys is confirmed by the satire of Etherege, who adds, much to the credit of Nelly, that she remembered in after years the friend of her youth, and that to her interest it was he owed his appointment in the Guards. To sift and exhibit the equal mixture of truth and error in these accounts would not repay the reader for the trouble I should occasion him. I have sifted them myself, and see reason to believe that Oldys was wrong in calling him a merchant; while I suspect that the Duncan commemorated by Etherege, in his satire upon Nelly, was the Dongan described by De Grammont as a gentleman of merit who succeeded Duras, afterwards Earl of Feversham, in the post of Lieutenant in the Duke's Life Guards. That there was a lieutenant of this name in the Duke's Life Guards I have ascertained from official documents. He was a cadet of the house of Limerick, and his Christian name was Robert. If there is truth in De Grammont's account, he died in or before 1669. A Colonel Dungan was Governor of New York in the reign of James II.*

Such, then, is all that can be ascertained, after full inquiry, of this Duncan or Dungan, by whom Nelly is said to have been lifted from her very humble condition in life. Such indeed is the whole of the information I have been able to obtain about "pretty witty Nell" from her birth to the winter of 1666, when we again hear of her through the indefatigable Pepys. How her life was passed during the fearful Plague season of 1665, or where she was during the Great Fire of London in the following year, it is now useless to conjecture. The transition from the orange-girl to the actress may easily be imagined without the intervention of any Mr. Dungan. The pert vivacity and ready wit she exhibited in later life, must have received early encouragement and culti-

*Secret Service Expenses of Charles II. and James II., p. 195. There is in one of Etherege's MS. satires a very coarse allusion to Dungan and Nelly.

vation from the warmth of language the men of sort and quality employed in speaking to all classes of females. This very readiness was her recommendation to Killigrew, to say nothing of her beauty or the merry laugh, which is said in after life to have pervaded her face till her eyes were almost invisible.*

As we owe our first introduction to Nelly to the Clerk of the Acts, so to him are we indebted for the earliest notice yet discovered of her appearance on the stage. Her part was that of the principal female character in a comedy (The English Monsieur) by the Hon. James Howard, a son of the Earl of Berkshire, the brother-in-law of Dryden, and brother of Philip, an officer of the King's Guards, and of Robert and Edward Howard, both also writers for the stage. But these, as we shall see hereafter, were not the only connexions with the stage of the Berkshire Howards. There is not much story in the English Monsieur, much force of character, or any particular vivacity in the dialogue. It is, however, very easy to see that the situations must have told with the audience for whom they were intended, and that the part of Lady Wealthy was one particularly adapted to the genius of Nell Gwyn; a part, in all probability written expressly for her. Lady Wealthy is a rich widow, with perfect knowledge of the importance of wealth and beauty, a good heart, and a fine full vein of humour, a woman, in short, that teases, and at last reforms and marries, the lover she is true to. The humour of the following dialogue will allow the reader to imagine much of the bye-play conducive to its success.

Lady Wealthy.—When will I marry you! When will I love ye, you should ask first.

Welbred.—Why! don't ye?

Lady W.—Why, do I? Did you ever hear me say I did?

* The London Chronicle, for Aug. 15—18, 1778; Waldron's Downes, p. 19.

Welbred.—I never heard you say you did not.

Lady W.—I'll say so now, then, if you long.

Welbred.—By no means. Say not a thing in haste you may repent at leisure.

Lady W.—Come, leave your fooling, or I'll swear it.

Welbred.—Don't, widow, for then you'll lie too.

Lady W.—Indeed it seems 'tis for my money you would have me.

Welbred.—For that, and something else you have.

Lady W.—Well, I'll lay a wager thou hast lost all thy money at play, for then you're always in a marrying humour. But, d'ye hear, gentleman, d'ye think to gain me with this careless way, or that I will marry one I don't think is in love with me?

Welbred.—Why, I am.

Lady W.—Then you would not be so merry. People in love are sad, and many times weep.

Welbred.—That will never do for thee, widow.

Lady W.—And why?

Welbred.—'Twould argue me a child; and I am confident if thou didst not verily believe I were a man, I should ne'er be thy husband. . . . . Weep for thee!—ha! ha! ha!—if e'er I do!

Lady W.—Go, hang yourself.

Welbred.—Thank you, for your advice.

Lady W.—When, then, shall I see you again?

Welbred.—When I have a mind to it. Come, I'll lead you to your coach for once.

Lady W.—And I'll let you for once. [*Exeunt.*

Pepys, who saw it on the 8th Dec., 1666, commends it highly. "To the King's House, and there," his entry runs, "did see a good part of the English Monsieur, which is a mighty pretty play, very witty and pleasant. And the women do very well; but above all, little Nelly; that I am mightily pleased with the play, and much with the house, the women doing better than I expected; and very fair women." Nor was his admiration abated when he saw it many months afterwards, 7th April, 1668, at the same house.

Nell's success on the stage was such that she was soon

called to represent prominent parts in the stock plays of her company. What these parts were, is, I believe, with very few exceptions, altogether unknown. One part, however, has reached us—that of Enanthe, or Celia, in the Humourous Lieutenant of Beaumont and Fletcher, a play that was long a favourite with the public—continuing to be frequently acted, and always with applause, throughout the reign of Charles II. The wit and fine poetry of the part of Celia are known to the readers of our English drama, nor is it difficult to conceive how effectively language like the following must have come from the lips of Nell Gwyn. She is in poor attire amid a mob, when she sees the King's son: —

> Was it the prince they said? How my heart trembles!
> [*Enter Demetrius, with a javelin in his hand.*
> 'Tis he indeed: what a sweet noble fierceness
> Dwells in his eyes! Young Meleager-like,
> When he returned from slaughter of the boar,
> Crown'd with the loves and honours of the people,
> With all the gallant youth of Greece, he looks now—
> Who could deny him love?

On one occasion of its performance Pepys was present, and though he calls it a silly play, his reader smiles at his bad taste, while he is grateful for the information that when the play was over he had gone with his wife behind the scenes, through the introduction of Mrs. Knep, who "brought to us Nelly, a most pretty woman, who acted the great part of Celia to-day very fine, and did it pretty well. I kissed her, and so did my wife, and a mighty pretty soul she is." Nor was his chronicle of the day concluded without a fresh expression of pleasure at what he had seen, summing up all as he does with the satisfactory words "specially kissing of Nell." * The

* Pepys, Jan. 23, 1666–7. Mr. Augustus Egg, A.R.A., has painted a clever picture from this passage.

remark of Walter Scott will occur to many, "it is just as well that Mrs. Pepys was present on this occasion."

Her skill increasing with her years, other poets sought to obtain the recommendations of her wit and beauty to the success of their writings. I have said that Dryden was one of the principal supporters of the King's House, and ere long in one of his new plays a principal character was set apart for the popular comedian. The drama was a tragi-comedy called "Secret Love, or, the Maiden Queen" and an additional interest was attached to its production, from the King having suggested the plot to its author, and calling it "his play." The dramatis personæ consist, curiously enough, of eight female, and only three male parts. Good acting was not wanting to forward its success. Mohun, Hart, and Burt, three of the best performers then on the stage, filled the only male parts—while Mrs. Marshall, Mrs. Knep, "Mrs. Eleanor Gwyn," and Mrs. Corey, sustained the principal female characters. The tragic scenes have little to recommend them; but the reputation of the piece was thought to have been redeemed by the excellence of the alloy of comedy, as Dryden calls it, in which it was generally agreed he was seldom happier. Even here, however, his dialogue wants that easy, brisk, pert character which Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar afterwards brought to such inimitable perfection, and of which Etherege alone affords a satisfactory example in the reign of Charles II.

The first afternoon of the new play was the 2nd of February, 1666–7. The King and the Duke of York were both present:—so too were both Mr. and Mrs. Pepys, who had heard the play mightily commended for the regularity of its story, and what Mr. Pepys is pleased to call "the strain and wit." The chief parts (its author tells us) were performed to a height of great excellence, both serious and comic; and it was

well received. The King objected, indeed, to the management of the last scene, where Celadon and Florimel (Hart and Nelly) are treating too lightly of their marriage in the presence of the Queen. But Pepys would not appear to have seen any defect of this description. "The truth is," he says, "there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimel, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again by man or woman. . . . . So great performance of a comical part was never I believe in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girl, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant, and hath the motion and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her." Nor did the worthy critic change his opinion. He calls it, after his second visit, an "excellent play, and so done by Nell her merry part as cannot be better done in nature."* While after his third visit he observes that it is *impossible* to have Florimel's part, which is the most comical that ever was made for woman, ever done better than it is by Nelly.†

The support of the performance rested, it must be owned, on Hart's character of Celadon and on Nelly's part of Florimel. Nell indeed had to sustain the heavier burden of the piece. She is seldom off the stage—all the loose rattle of dialogue belongs to her, nay more, she appears in the fifth act in male attire, dances a jig in the same act, often of itself sufficient to save a play, and ultimately speaks the epilogue in defence of the author;

> I left my client yonder in a rant
> Against the envious and the ignorant,
> Who are he says his only enemies;
> But he contemns their malice, and defies
> The sharpest of his censurers to say
> Where there is one gross fault in all his play,

* Pepys, March 25, 1667.

† Pepys, May 24, 1667.

The language is so fitted to each part,
The plot according to the rules of art ;
And twenty other things he bid me tell you,
But I cry'd "E'en go do't yourself, for Nelly!"

There are incidents and allusions in the parts of Celadon and Florimel which must have carried a personal application to those who were, speaking technically, behind the scenes. Nelly, if not actually the mistress at this time of Charles Hart, was certainly looked upon by many as very little less. Their marriage in the play is more of a Fleet or May Fair mockery than a religious ceremony,—as if, to use Florimel's own language, they were married by the more agreeable names of mistress and gallant, rather than those dull old-fashioned ones of husband and wife.

Florimel, it appears to me, must have been Nelly's *chef d'œuvre* in her art. I can hear her exclaiming with a prophetic feeling of its truth, "I am resolved to grow fat and look young till forty, and then slip out of the world with the first wrinkle and the reputation of five-and-twenty;" while I can picture to myself, as my readers will easily do, Nelly in boy's clothes, dressed to the admiration of Etherege and Sedley, scanned from head to foot with much surprise by Mr. Pepys and Sir William Penn, viewed with other feelings by Lord Buckhurst on one side of the house, and by the King himself on the other, while to the admiration of the author, and of the whole audience, she exclaims, with wonderful bye-play, "Yonder they are, and this way they must come. If clothes and a *bonne mien* will take 'm I shall do't.—Save you, Monsieur Florimel! Faith, methinks you are a very janty fellow, *poudré et ajusté* as well as the best of 'em. I can manage the little comb—set my hat, shake my garniture, toss about my empty noddle, walk with a courant slur, and at every step peck down my head:—if I should be mistaken for some courtier, now, pray where's the

difference?" This was what Beau Hewit or Beau Fielding were enacting every day in their lives, and Colley Cibber lived to be the last actor who either felt or could make others feel its truth and application.

Nelly was living at this time in the fashionable part of Drury Lane, the Strand or Covent Garden end, for Drury Lane in the days of Charles II. was inhabited by a very different class of people from those who now occupy it—or, indeed, who have lived in it since the time Gay guarded us from "Drury's mazy courts and dark abodes"—since Pope described it only too truly as peopled by drabs of the lowest character, and by authors "lulled by soft zephyrs," through the broken pane of a garret window. The upper end, towards St. Giles's Pound and Montague House, had its squalid quarters, like Lewknor Lane and the Coal Yard, in which, as we have concluded, our Nelly was born; but at the Strand end lived the Earl of Anglesey, long Lord Privy Seal, and the Earls of Clare and Craven, whose names are still perpetuated in Clare Market and Craven Yard. Drury Lane, when Nelly was living there, was a kind of Park Lane of the present day, made up of noblemen's mansions, small houses, inns and stable-yards. Nor need the similitude be thus restricted; for the Piazza of Covent Garden was then to Drury Lane what Grosvenor Square is at present to Park Lane. Squalid quarters indeed have always been near neighbours to lordly localities. When Nelly lodged in Drury Lane, Covent Garden had its Lewknor Lane, and Lincoln's Inn Fields their Whetstone Park. Belgravia has now its Tothill Street—Portman Square has its contaminating neighbourhood of Calmel Buildings—and one of the most infamous of alleys is within half a stone's throw of St. James's Palace! Nelly's lodgings were near the lodgings of Lacy the actor, at the top of Maypole Alley,

Where Drury Lane descends into the Strand,

and over against the gate of Craven House. The look-out afforded a peep into a part of Wych Street, and while standing at the doorway you could see the far-famed Maypole in the Strand, at the bottom of the alley to which it had lent its name.

This Maypole, long a conspicuous ornament to the west-end of London, rose to a great height above the surrounding houses, and was surmounted by a crown and vane, with the royal arms richly gilded. It had been set up again immediately after the Restoration. Great ceremonies attended its erection: twelve picked seamen superintending the tackle, and ancient people clapping their hands and exclaiming, "Golden days begin to appear!" Nelly must have remembered the erection of the Maypole at the bottom of the lane in which she was born; but there is little save some gable-ends and old timber-fronts near her "lodgings-door" to assist in carrying the mind back to the days of the Maypole and the merry mon arch whose recall it was designed to commemorate.

Among the many little domestic incidents perpetuated by Pepys, there are few to which I would sooner have been a witness than the picture he has left us of Nelly standing at her door watching the milkmaids on May-day. The Clerk of the Acts on his way from Seething Lane in the City, met, he tells us, "many milkmaids with garlands upon their pails, dancing with a fiddle before them," and saw pretty Nelly standing at her lodgings-door in Drury Lane in her smock sleeves and bodice looking upon one. "She seemed," he adds, "a mighty pretty creature." This was in 1667, while her recent triumphs on the stage were still fresh at Court, and the obscurity of her birth was a common topic of talk and banter among the less fortunate inhabitants of the lane she lived in. The scene so lightly sketched by Pepys might furnish no unfitting subject for the pencil of Leslie or Maclise—a subject indeed which would

shine in their hands. That absence of all false pride, that innate love of unaffected nature, and that fondness for the simple sports of the people which the incident exhibits are characteristics of Nelly from the first moment to the last—following her naturally, and sitting alike easily and gracefully upon her, whether at her humble lodgings in Drury Lane, at her handsome house in Pall Mall, or even under the gorgeous cornices of Whitehall.

But I have no intention of finding a model heroine in a coal-yard, or any wish either to palliate or condemn too severely the frailties of the woman whose story I have attempted to relate. It was therefore within a very few months of the May-day scene I have just described, that whispers asserted, and the news was soon published in every coffee-house in London, how little Miss Davis of the Duke's House had become the mistress of the King, and Nell Gwyn at the other theatre the mistress of Lord Buckhurst. Whoever is at all conversant with the manners and customs of London life in the reign of Charles II. will confirm me in the statement that two such announcements, even at the same time, would cause but little surprise, or indeed any other feeling than that of envy at their good luck. With the single exception of Mrs. Betterton, there was not, I believe, an actress at either theatre who had not been or was not then the mistress of some person about the Court. Actors were looked upon as little better than shopmen or servants. When the Honourable Edward Howard was struck by Lacy of the King's House, a very general feeling prevailed that Howard should have run his sword through the menial body of the actor. Nor was this feeling altogether extinguished till the period of the Kembles. It was entirely owing to the exertions of the great Lord Mansfield, that Arthur Murphy, less than a century ago, was allowed to enter his name on the books of Lincoln's Inn. He had been previously

refused by the Benchers of the Middle Temple, for no other reason than that he had been an actor. Nay, George Selwyn, it is well known, excluded Brinsley Sheridan from Brooks's on three occasions because *his father* had been upon the stage.

Nor did actresses fare better than actors. If anything, indeed, they were still worse treated. They were looked upon as women of the worst character, possessed of no inclination or inducement to virtue. Few, indeed, were found to share the sentiment expressed by one of Shadwell's manliest characters, "I love the stage too well to keep any of their women, to make 'em proud and insolent and despise that calling to take up a worse." The frailty of "playhouse flesh and blood"* afforded a common topic for the poet in his prologue or his epilogue, and other writers than Lee might be found who complain of the practice of "keeping" as a grievance to the stage.† Davenant, foreseeing their fate from an absence of any control, boarded his four principal actresses in his own house; but, with one exception (that of Mrs. Betterton before referred to), the precaution was altogether without effect. The King, Prince Rupert, the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Oxford, Lord Buckhurst, Sir Charles Sedley, Sir Philip Howard, his brother Sir Robert Howard, were all successful in the arts of seduction or inducement. So bad indeed was the moral discipline of the times, that even Mrs. Knep, loose as were her notions of virtue, could see the necessity of parting with a pretty servant girl, as the tiring-room was no place for the preservation of her innocence.‡ The virtuous life of Mrs. Bracegirdle, and her spirited rebuke to the Earl of Burlington, stand out in noble relief from the conduct of her fellow actresses. The Earl had sent her a letter, and a present of a handsome set of china. The charming actress retained the

* Dryden's Prologue to Marriage a la Mode. † Epilogue to The Rival Queens.

‡ Pepys, April 7, 1668.

letter and informed the servant of the mistake. The letter, she said, was for her, but the china was for Lady Burlington. When the Earl returned home he found his Countess all happiness at the unexpected present from her husband.*

Times, however, changed after Nelly had gone, and the Stuarts had ceased to reign, for ennobled actresses are now common enough in the English peerage. Other changes too took place. Mrs. Barry walked home in her clogs, and Mrs. Bracegirdle in her pattens; but Mrs. Oldfield went away in her chair,† and Lavinia Felton (the original Polly Peachum) rolled westward in her coroneted carriage as Duchess of Bolton. ‡

It says little for the morality of London in the reign of Charles II., but something for the taste of the humble orange-girl, that the lover who had attracted her, and with whom she was now living in the lovely neighbourhood of Epsom, was long looked up to as the best bred man of his age:

> None ever had so strange an art
> His passion to convey
> Into a list'ning virgin's heart,
> And steal her soul away.§

But Buckhurst had other qualities to recommend him than his youth (he was thirty at this time), his rank, his good heart, and his good breeding. He had already distinguished himself by his personal intrepidity in the war against the Dutch; had written the best song of its kind in the English language, and some of the severest and most refined satires we possess; was the friend of all the poets of eminence in his time, as he was

* Walpole to Mann, (Mann Letters,) iii. 254. † Walpole, May 26, 1742.

‡ Mr. Murray, of Albemarle Street, possesses Hogarth's interesting picture of the first representation of the Beggar's Opera, in its original frame. Here his Grace of Bolton is gazing upon Polly from one stage-box—while in the other, Bolingbroke is seated by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

§ Song by Sir C. S. [Sir Carr Scroope or Sir Charles Sedley] in Etherege's Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter.

afterwards the most munificent patron of men of genius that this country has yet seen. The most eminent masters in their several lines asked and abided by his judgment, and afterwards dedicated their works to him in grateful acknowledgment of his taste and favours. Butler owed to him that the Court "tasted" his Hudibras; Wycherley that the town "liked" his Plain Dealer; and the Duke of Buckingham deferred to publish his Rehearsal till he was sure, as he expressed it, that my Lord Buckhurst would not "rehearse" upon him again. Nor was this all. His table was one of the last that gave us an example of the old housekeeping of an English nobleman. A freedom reigned about it which made every one of the guests think himself at home, and an abundance which showed that the master's hospitality extended to many more than those who had the honour to sit at table with himself.* Nor has he been less happy after death. Pope wrote his epitaph and Prior his panegyric—while Walpole and Macaulay (two men with so little apparently in common) have drawn his character with a warmth of approbation rather to have been expected from those who had shared his bounty or enjoyed his friendship, than from the colder judgments of historians looking back calmly upon personages who had long ceased to influence or affect society.

With such a man, and with Sedley's resistless wit to add fresh vigour to the conversation, it is easy to understand what Pepys had heard, that Lord Buckhurst and Nelly kept "merry house" at Epsom,—

> All hearts fall a-leaping wherever she comes,
> And beat night and day like my Lord Craven's drums. †

What this Epsom life was like shall be the subject of another Chapter.

* Prior's Dedication of his Poems to Lord Buckhurst's son, Lionel, first Duke of Dorset.

† Song by Lord Buckhurst.

CHAPTER III.

Epsom in the reign of Charles II.—England in 1667—Nelly resumes her Engagement at the King's Theatre—Inferior in Tragedy to Comedy—Plays Mirida in "All Mistaken"—Miss Davis of the Duke's Theatre—Her song, "My Lodging it is on the Cold Ground," parodied by Nell—Influence of the Duke of Buckingham in controlling the predilections of the King—Charles II. at the Duke's Theatre—Nelly has leading parts in three of Dryden's new Plays—Buckhurst is made a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, promised a peerage, and sent on a sleeveless errand into France—Nell becomes the Mistress of the King—Plays Almahide in "The Conquest of Granada"—The King more than ever enamoured—Parallel case of Perdita Robinson and George IV.

Nelly was now at Epsom, then and long after the fashionable resort of the richer citizens of London. "The foolish world is never to be mended," is the remark of "a gentleman of wit and sense" in Shadwell's comedy of The Virtuoso. "Your glass coach," he says, "will to Hyde Park for air; the suburb fools trudge to Lamb's Conduit or Tottenham; your sprucer sort of citizens gallop to Epsom; your mechanic gross fellows, shewing much conjugal affection, strut before their wifes, each with a child in his arms, to Islington or Hogsden." The same agreeable writer, whose plays supply truer and happier illustrations of the manners and customs of the time than any other contemporary dramatist, has left us a comedy called "Epsom Wells," in which, notwithstanding the sneer of Dryden about his "hungry Epsom-prose," he has contrived to interest us by peopling the place with the usual frequenters out of term-time; men of wit and pleasure; young ladies of wit, beauty, and fortune; with a parson and a country justice; with two cheating, sharking cowardly bullies; with two rich citizens of London and their wives, one a comfitmaker, the other a haberdasher,

and both cuckolds ("Epsom water-drinking" with other ladies of pleasure); with hectors from Covent Garden, a constable, a Dogberry-like watch, and two country fiddlers—in short, by picturing "the freedom of Epsom" as it existed in an age of easy virtue.

The Derby and the Oaks, the races which have rendered Epsom so famous, and our not less celebrated Tattenham Corner, were then unknown; but the King's Head and the New Inn, Clay Hill and Mawse's Garden, were favourite names, full of attractions to London apprentices, sighing to see their indentures at an end, and Epsom no longer excluded from their places of resort. The waters were considered efficacious, and the citizens east of Temple Bar were supposed to receive as much benefit from their use, as the courtiers west of the Bar were presumed to receive from the waters of Tunbridge Wells. The alderman or his deputy, on their way to this somewhat inaccessible suburb of the reign of Charles II., were met at Tooting by lodging-house keepers, tradesmen, and quack-doctors, with so many clamorous importunities for patronage, that the very expressive English word *touting* derives its origin from the village where this plying for trade was carried to so importunate an extent.

There is now at Epsom, or was to be seen there till very lately, a small inn with the sign of the King's Head, lying somewhat out of the present town, on the way to the wells. It was at "the next house" to this inn, or to an inn with the same name, that Nelly and Lord Buckhurst put up, keeping "merry house," with Sedley to assist them in laughing at the "Bowbell suckers" who resorted to the Epsom waters.* Nelly would contribute her share to the merriment of the scene around them. The citizens of London were hated by the players. They had successfully opposed them in all their early attempts in the

* Pepys, 14 July, 1667.

reigns of Elizabeth and James I. to erect a theatre within the jurisdiction of the city; and at no time had they ever encouraged the drama by their presence. The poets and actors lived by the King and court, while they repaid their opponents and gratified the courtiers by holding up every citizen as a cuckold and a fool. So long was this feeling perpetuated on the stage (it still lives in our literature), that Garrick, in his endeavour to supplant the usual performance of the "London Cuckolds" on the 9th of November (Lord Mayor's day), was reduced to play first to a noisy and next to an empty house.

Whilst Buckhurst and Nelly kept "merry house" at Epsom in the months of July and August, 1667, it was not altogether merry in England elsewhere. The plague of 1665 had been followed by the fire of 1666, and both plague and fire in 1667 by the national shame of a Dutch fleet insulting us in the Thames, burning some of our finest ships in the Medway at Chatham, and by the undeserved disgrace inflicted by the King and his imperious mistress, Castlemaine, on the great Lord Clarendon. Wise and good men, too, were departing from among us. Cowley finished the life of an elegant and amiable recluse at Chertsey in Surrey, and Jeremy Taylor that of a saint at Lisnegarry, in Ireland. England, too, in the same year, had lost the loyal Marquess of Worcester and the virtuous Earl of Southampton, neither of whom could she well spare at such a period; on the other hand, the country was receiving a noble addition to her literature by the publication of "Paradise Lost;" but this, few at the time cared to read, as the work of "*that* Milton who wrote for the regicides,"*—"*that* Paradise Lost of Milton's which some are pleased to call a poem,"† or chose to understand, from the seriousness of the subject, or the grandeur of its treatment.

* Evelyn's Diary, 2 June, 1686.

† Rymer's Letter to Fleetwood Sheppard, p. 143.

At the Court, where undisguised libertinism was still triumphant, the burning of the city began to be talked of as an old story, like that of the burning of Troy, and the disgrace at Chatham as something to be obliterated by the disgrace of the Lord Chancellor. Indeed there was no feeling of fear, or any sentiment of deserved dishonour maintained at Court. On the very day on which the Great Seal was taken from Clarendon, and his ruin effected, the Countess of Castlemaine, one of the leading instruments of his fall, was admiring the rope-dancing of Jacob Hall, and laughing at the drolls and odd animals exhibited to the citizens at Bartholomew Fair!

Nelly, after a month's absence, returned to London in August, 1667, and resumed some of her old parts at the theatre in Drury Lane, playing Bellario in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Philaster;" Panthea, in "A King and No King," of the same authors; Cydaria, in "The Indian Emperor," of Dryden and his brother-in-law; Samira, in Sir Robert Howard's "Surprisal;" Flora, in "Flora's Vagaries," a comedy attributed to Rhodes; and Mirida, in "All Mistaken, or the Mad Couple," of the Hon. James Howard. Of her performance in some of these parts Pepys again is our only informant. How graphic are his entries!

"22 Aug. 1667. With my lord Brouncker and his mistress to the King's playhouse, and there saw the 'Indian Emperor,' where I found Nell come again, which I am glad of; but was most infinitely displeased with her being put to act the Emperor's daughter, which is a great and serious part, which she does most basely. The rest of the play, though pretty good, was not well acted by most of them, methought; so that I took no great content in it.

"26 Aug. 1667. To the King's playhouse and saw 'The Surprisal,' a very mean play I thought, or else it was because I was out of humour, and but very little company in the house. Sir W. Pen and I had a great deal of discourse with [Orange] Moll, who tells us that Nell is already left by my Lord Buckhurst, and that he makes sport of her, and swears she hath had all she could get of him; and Hart, her great admirer, now hates her; and that she is very poor, and hath lost my Lady Castlemaine, who was her great friend, also; but she is come to the house, but is neglected by them all.

"5 Oct. 1667. To the King's house, and there going in met Knipp, and she took us up to the tiring rooms; and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself [as Flora], and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought. And into the scene-room, and there sat down, and she gave us fruit; and here I read the questions to Knipp, while she answered me through all the part of 'Flora's vagaries,' which was acted to-day. But, Lord! to see how they were both painted would make a man mad, and did make me loath them; and what base company of men comes among them, and how lewdly they talk! and how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candlelight, is very observable. But to see how Nell cursed for having so few people in the pit was pretty; the other house carrying away all the people at the new play, and is said now-a-days to have generally most company, as being better players.

"26 Dec. 1667. With my wife to the King's playhouse, and there saw 'The Surprisal,' which did not please me to-day, the actors not pleasing me, and especially Nell's acting of a serious part, which she spoils.

"28 Dec. 1667. To the King's House, and there saw 'The Mad Couple,' which is but an ordinary play; but only Nell's and Hart's mad parts are most excellent done, but especially hers, which makes it a miracle to me to think how ill she do any serious part, as, the other day, just like a fool or changeling; and in a mad part do beyond imitation almost."

That Nell hated "serious parts," in which, as Pepys assures us, she was poor, we have her own testimony, in an epilogue which she spoke a few months later to the tragedy of the "Duke of Lerma."

> I know you in your hearts
> Hate serious plays—as I hate serious parts.

And again in the epilogue to "Tyrannick Love:"

> I die
> Out of my calling in a tragedy.

The truth is (as I see reason to believe), such parts were thrust upon her by Hart, her old admirer, who hated her for preferring Lord Buckhurst to himself. But this feeling was soon overcome, and Nell, as Mirida in the comedy of "All Mistaken,"

added to her well-earned reputation as an actress, obeying the advice of Mrs. Barry, "Make yourself mistress of your part, and leave the figure and action to nature."*

"All Mistaken, or the Mad Couple," a play commended by some, says Langbaine, "as an excellent comedy," has little merit of its own to recommend it to the reader. The whole success of the performance must have rested on Hart and Nelly. Philidor (Hart) is mad, or as we should now call him a madcap, kinsman of an Italian Duke, and Mirida (Nelly) is a madcap young lady of the same eccentric school. Philidor is troubled with clamorous importunities for marriage from six young ladies whom he has betrayed, and for money from those nurses by whom his children have been taken; and Mirida is persecuted with the importunate addresses, at the same time, of a very lean and of a very fat lover. Some of the pleasantries to which the madcap couple resort are of a coarse and practical character. Philidor tricks his besiegers, and Mirida replies to her importunate lovers that she will marry the lean one when he is fatter, and the fat one when he is leaner. The arts which the suitors have recourse to are somewhat tedious, and certainly not over decent. Yet it is easy to see that the play would tell with the audience to whom it was addressed, for many of the situations are humorous in the extreme. In one of the scenes Philidor and Mirida are bound back to back by the six ladies, Philidor losing his money and his hat, and Mirida consoling herself by the entry of a fiddler.

[Enter *Fiddler.*] *Mirida.*—A fiddle, nay then I am made again; I'd have a dance if I had nothing but my smock on. Fiddler, strike up and play my jig, call'd "I care not a pin for any man."†

* Curll's Stage, p. 62.

† Nell was famous for dancing jigs. The Duke of Buckingham, in his Epilogue to "The Chances," laughs at poets who mistook the praise given to Nelly's jig for the praise bestowed on their own performances.

Fiddler.—Indeed I can't stay. I am going to play to some gentlemen.

Mirida.—Nay, thou shalt stay but a little.

Fiddler.—Give me half-a-crown then.

Mirida.—I have no money about me; but here, take my hankercher.

[*Dance and Exit.*

In another part Mirida manages a sham funeral for Philidor, to which the six young ladies are invited, to hear the will of the deceased.

Mirida.—Poor young man, he was killed yesterday by a duel.

"Item. I give to Mrs. Mary for a reason that she knows, 500*l.* Item. 500*l.* to Mrs. Margaret for a reason she knows. Item. 500*l.* to Mrs. Sarah for a reason she knows. Item. 500*l.* to Mrs. Martha for a reason she knows. Item. 500*l.* to Mrs. Alice for a reason she knows. Item. 500*l.* to Mrs. Elinor for a reason she knows, and so to all the rest. Item. To my nurses I leave each of them 20*l.* a year apiece for their lives, besides their arrears due to them for nursing. These sums of money and legacies I leave to be raised and paid out of my manor of Constantinople, in which the Great Turk is now tenant for life." [*Laughs aside.*] If they should hear how their legacies are to be paid, how they'd fall a-drumming on his coffin!

There is more of this; but it is time to turn to that incident from which the play derived its popularity, its satire on a recent event at the Duke's Theatre.

"The Rivals," a play altered by Davenant from "The Two Noble Kinsmen" of Beaumont and Fletcher, or rather of Fletcher alone, was brought upon the stage about 1664, but would not appear to have met with any great success till 1667, when the part of Celania was represented by little Miss Davis, who danced a jig in the play and then sang a song in it, both of which found their way direct to the heart of the merry monarch. The jig was probably some fresh French importation, or nothing more than a rustic measure, with a few foreign innovations. The song has reached us, and has much ballad beauty to recommend it.

My lodging it is on the cold ground,
And very hard is my fare,
But that which troubles me most is
The unkindness of my dear.
Yet still I cry, O turn love,
And I pr'ythee, love, turn to me,
For thou art the man that I long for,
And alack what remedy!

I'll crown thee with a garland of straw, then,
And I'll marry thee with a rush ring,
My frozen hopes shall thaw then,
And merrily we will sing.
O turn to me, my dear love,
And prythee, love, turn to me,
For thou art the man that alone canst
Procure my liberty.

But if thou wilt harden thy heart still,
And be deaf to my pitiful moan,
Then I must endure the smart still,
And tumble in straw alone.
Yet still, I cry, O turn, love,
And I prythee, love, turn to me,
For thou art the man that alone art
The cause of my misery.*

The success of the song is related by the prompter of the theatre in his curious little volume, called "Roscius Anglicanus." "All the women's parts," says Downes, "were admirably acted, but what pleased most was the part of Celania, a shepherdess, mad for love, and her song of 'My lodging is on the cold ground,' which she performed," he adds, "so charmingly that not long after it raised her from her bed on the cold ground to a bed royal."†

I might be excused for referring, at this period of Nelly's

* The stage direction is—"That done she lies down and falls asleep."

† "Roscius Anglicanus," p. 24. ed. 1708.

life, to the ribald personalities common to the stage in the reign of Charles II., but I am unwilling to stop the stream of my narrative by delaying to relate the personal reference made by Nell, in the play of "All Mistaken," to the song and the incident at the Duke's House, which raised little Miss Davis to a "bed royal." The scene in "All Mistaken" which doubtless gave the greatest delight to the audience at Drury Lane, was that in the last act, where Pinguisier, the fat lover, sobs his complaints into the ear of the madcap Mirida.

Mirida.—Dear love, come sit thee in my lap, and let me know if I can enclose thy world of fat and love within these arms. See, I cannot nigh compass my desires by a mile.

Pinguisier.—How is my fat a rival to my joys! sure I shall weep it all away. [*Cries.*

Mirida.—

Lie still, my babe, lie still and sleep,
It grieves me sore to see thee weep,
Wert thou but leaner I were glad;
Thy fatness makes thy dear love sad.

What a lump of love have I in my arms!

My lodging is on the cold boards,
And wonderful hard is my fare,
But that which troubles me most is
The fatness of my dear.
Yet still I cry, Oh melt, love,
And I prythee now melt apace,
For thou art the man I should long for
If 'twere not for thy grease.

Pinguisier.—

Then prythee don't harden thy heart still,
And be deaf to my pitiful moan,
Since I do endure the smart still,
And for my fat do groan.
Then prythee now turn, my dear love,
And I prythee now turn to me,
For, alas! I am too fat still
To roll so far to thee.

The nearer the fat man rolls towards her, the further she rolls away from him, till she at length rises and laughs her hearty Mrs. Jordan-like mirth-provoking laugh, first at the man and then towards the audience, seizes a couple of swords from a cutler passing by, disarms her fat lover, and makes him the ridicule of the whole house. It is easy to see that this would not take now, even with another Nelly to represent it; but every age has its fashion and its humour, and that of Charles II. had fashions and humours of its own, quite as diverting as any of the representations and incidents which still prove attractive to a city or a west-end audience.

"Little Miss Davis" danced and sang divinely, but was not particularly beautiful, though she had fine eyes and a neat figure, both of which are preserved in her portrait at Cashiobury, by Sir Peter Lely.* The popular belief still lingering among the cottages surrounding the old Jacobean mansion of the Howards at Charlton in Wiltshire, that she was the daughter of a blacksmith, and was at one time a milkmaid, can only in part be true. Pepys was informed by Mrs. Pearse, wife of James Pearse, surgeon to the Duke of York and surgeon of the regiment commanded by the Duke, that she was an illegitimate child of Colonel Howard, son of the Earl of Berkshire, and brother of James Howard, author of the play in which, as we have seen, she was held up to ridicule through the inimitable acting of Nell Gwyn. The King's affection for her was shown in a marked and open manner. The ring of rushes referred to in the song was exchanged for a ring of the value of 700*l.*, and her lodging about Ludgate or Lincoln's Inn (the usual resorts of the players at the Duke's Theatre) for a house in Suffolk Street, Haymarket, furnished by the King

* This is a half-length, seated,—the same portrait, I suspect, which Mrs. Beale saw in Bap. May's lodgings at Whitehall. The curious full-length portrait of her in after-life by Kneller, and now at Audley End, barely supplies a single feature that is attractive.

expressly for her use. The Queen, before she was worn into complete indifference by the uncontrolled vices of her husband, resented them at times with the spirit of a woman. When Miss Davis was dancing one of her favourite "jigs" in a play at Court, the Queen rose and "would not stay to see it." Nor was the imperious Countess of Castlemaine less incensed than the Queen herself at the unwelcome intrusion of little Miss Davis within the innermost chambers and withdrawing-rooms of Whitehall. Her revenge, however, was peculiarly her own —she ran into open infidelities; and, as the King had set her aside for an actress at his brother's house, so to be "even" with him (the expression is in Pepys), she extended her favours to Charles Hart, the handsome and celebrated actor, at his own house.

The Duke of Buckingham (the wit, and the second and last Duke of the Villiers family) is thought to have been the principal agent at this time in directing and confirming the predilections of the King. The Duke and Lady Castlemaine had newly quarrelled, fiercely and almost openly, and both were devising means of revenge characteristic of their natures. By the influence of the Countess the Duke was removed from his seat at the council, and the Duke in return "studied to take the King from her by new amours," and thinking, truly enough, that a "gaiety of humour," would take with his Majesty more than beauty without humour, he encouraged his passion for little Miss Davis by all the arts and insinuations he was master of. The King, too, was readier than usual to adopt any new excess of enjoyment which Buckingham could offer him. La Belle Stuart, the only woman for whom he would seem to have entertained any sincere affection, had left his court in secret a few months before, and worse still had given herself in marriage to the Duke of Richmond, without his approbation, and even without his knowledge. Castlemaine was now past her

zenith, though she retained much beauty to the last, and found admirers in the great Duke of Marlborough, when young, and in Beau Fielding, long the handsomest man about town. Yet Charles was not really unkind to her at any time. The song which he caused Will Legge to sing to her—

> Poor Alinda's growing old,—
> Those charms are now no more,—*

must have caused her some temporary uneasiness and a disdainful curl of her handsome and imperious lip; but she knew her influence and managed to retain it almost unimpaired to the very last, in spite of many excesses, which Buckingham seldom failed to discover and make known to the King.

Of the King, the Countess, and pretty Miss Davis, at this period, Pepys affords us a sketch in little—but to the point: —

"21 Dec. 1668. To the Duke's playhouse, and saw 'Macbeth.' The King and court there; and we sat just under them and my Lady Castlemaine, and close to a woman that comes into the pit, a kind of loose gossip, that pretends to be like her, and is so, something. And my wife, by my troth, appeared I think as pretty as any of them; I never thought so much before; and so did Talbot and W. Hewer, as I heard they said to one another. The King and the Duke of York minded me, and smiled upon me at the handsome woman near me; but it vexed me to see Moll Davis, in the box over the King's and my Lady Castlemaine's, look down upon the King, and he up to her; and so did my Lady Castlemaine once, to see who it was; but when she saw Moll Davis she looked like fire, which troubled me."

To complete the picture which Pepys has left us, we have only to turn to "The True Widow," of Shadwell, where, in the fourth act, the scene is laid in "the Playhouse," and stage directions of this character occur: "Enter women masked;" "Several young coxcombs fool with the orange-women;" "He sits down and lolls in the orange-wench's lap;" "Raps people on the backs and twirls their hats, and then looks demurely,

* Lord Dartmouth's note in Burnet, i. 458, ed. 1823. Where are these verses to be found?

as if he did not do it;"—such were daily occurrences at both theatres in the reign of Charles II.

> Such were our pleasures in the days of yore,
> When amorous Charles Britannia's sceptre bore;
> The mighty scene of joy the Park was made,
> And Love in couples peopled every shade.
> But since at Court the moral taste is lost,
> What mighty sums have velvet couches cost! *

We are now less barefaced in our immoralities, but are we really better? Was Whitehall in the reign of Charles II. worse than St. James's Palace in the reign of George II., or Carlton House in the regency of George IV.? Were Mrs. Robinson, Mary Anne Clarke, or Dora Jordan, better women than Eleanor Gwyn or Mary Davis? Will future historians prefer the old Duke of Queensbury and the late Marquis of Hertford to the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Rochester?

A new play of this period, in which Nelly performed the heroine, is the "Black Prince," written by the Earl of Orrery, and acted for the first time at the King's House, on the 19th October, 1667. Nelly's part was Alizia or Alice Piers, the mistress of Edward III.; and the following lines must have often in after life occurred to recollection, not from their poetry, which is little enough, but from their particular applicability to her own story.

> You know, dear friend, when to this court I came,
> My eyes did all our bravest youths inflame;
> And in that happy state I lived awhile,
> When Fortune did betray me with a smile;
> Or rather Love against my peace did fight;
> And to revenge his power, which I did slight,
> Made Edward our victorious monarch be
> One of those many who did sigh for me.

* Gay to Pulteney.

All other flame but his I did deride ;
They rather made my trouble than my pride :
But this, when told me, made me quickly know,
Love is a god to which all hearts must bow.

The King was present at the first performance, when his own heart was acknowledging and his own eyes betraying the sense he entertained of the beauty and wit of the charming actress who played Alizia on the stage, and who was hereafter to move in the same sphere in which the original had moved—with greater honesty and much more affection.

While little Miss Davis was living in handsome lodgings in Suffolk Street, and baring her hand in public in the face of the Countess of Castlemaine, to show the 700*l.* ring which the King had given her, a report arose that "the King had sent for Nelly."* Nor was it long before this gossip of the town was followed by other rumours about her, not likely, it was thought, to be true, from her constant appearance on the stage, speaking prologues in fantastic hats and Amazonian habits,† playing as she did, too, at this time Valeria in Dryden's last new tragedy of "Tyrannick Love, or the Royal Martyr," and Donna Jacintha in Dryden's latest comedy, called "An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer." Other rumours, relating to Lord Buckhurst, and since found to be true, were current at the same time,—that he had been made a groom of the King's bedchamber, with a pension of a thousand pounds a-year, commencing from Michaelmas, 1668; that he had received the promise of a peerage at his grandfather's death; and that he had been sent by the King on a complimentary visit to a foreign power, or, as Dryden is said to have called it, on a "sleeveless errand"‡ into France. In the meantime gossips

* Pepys, 11 January, 1667-8.

† Before the 1669 edition of Catiline is a prologue "to be merrily spoke by Mrs. Nell in an Amazonian habit." Pepys and Evelyn both saw Catiline acted on the 19th Dec., 1668.

‡ Note by Boyer in his translation of De Grammont, 8vo, 1714, p. 343.

in both the theatres were utterly at a loss to reconcile the stories repeated by the orange-women that Nelly was often at Whitehall with her constant attention to her theatrical engagements, and the increasing skill she exhibited in the acquirements of her art. Nor was it till the winter of 1669, or rather the spring of 1670, that the fact of the postponement of a new tragedy by Dryden, on account of Nelly's being away, confirmed some of the previous rumours; and it was known even east of Temple Bar, and among the Puritans in the Blackfriars, that Nelly had become the mistress of the King.

When this important change in her condition took place—a change that removed her from many temptations, and led to the exhibition of traits of character and good feeling which more than account for the fascination connected with her name—she was studying the part of Almahide in Dryden's new tragedy, "The Conquest of Granada." Before, however, the play could be produced Nelly was near giving birth to the future Duke of St. Albans, and therefore unable to appear, so that Dryden was obliged to postpone the production of his piece till another season. The poet alludes to this postponement in his epilogue,—

> Think him not duller for the year's delay;
> He was prepared, the women were away;
> And men without their parts can hardly play.
> If they through sickness seldom did appear,
> Pity the virgins of each theatre;
> For at both houses 'twas a sickly year!
> And pity us, your servants, to whose cost
> In one such sickness nine whole months were lost.

The allusion is to Miss Davis at the Duke's, and to Nelly at the King's; but the poet's meaning has escaped his editors.

The "Conquest of Granada" was first performed in the autumn of 1670,—Hart playing Almanzor to Nelly's Almahide.

With what manliness and grace of elocution must Hart have delivered the well-known lines,—

> I am as free as Nature first made man,
> Ere the base laws of servitude began,
> When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

The attraction, however, of the play rested mainly upon Nelly, who spoke the prologue "in a broad-brimmed hat and waist-belt," and apologised in the following manner for her appearance, to the renewed delight of the whole audience:

> This jest was first of th' other House's making,
> And, five times tried, has never failed of taking;
> For 'twere a shame a poet should be kill'd
> Under the shelter of so broad a shield.
> This is that hat whose very sight did win ye
> To laugh and clap as though the devil were in ye.
> As then for Nokes, so now I hope you'll be
> So dull to laugh once more for love of me.

The jest "of the other house's making" is said to have occurred in May, 1670, while the Court was at Dover, to receive the King's sister, the beautiful Duchess of Orleans. The reception of her royal highness was attended with much pomp and gaiety—the Duke's company of actors playing Shadwell's "Sullen Lovers," and Caryl's "Sir Salomon, or the Cautious Coxcomb," before the Duchess and her suite. One of the characters in Caryl's comedy is that of Sir Arthur Addle, a bawling fop, played by Nokes with a reality of action and manner then unsurpassed upon the stage. The dress of the French attending the Duchess, and present at the performance of the plays, included an excessively short laced scarlet or blue coat, with a broad waist-belt, which Nokes took care to laugh at, by wearing a still shorter coat of the same character, to which the Duke of Monmouth added a sword and

belt from his own side, so that he looked, as old Downes the prompter assures us, more like a dressed-up ape, or a quiz on the French, than Sir Arthur Addle. The jest took at once, King Charles and his whole Court falling into an excess of laughter as soon as he appeared upon the stage, and the French showing their chagrin at the personality and folly of the imitation. The sword, which the Duke had buckled on the actor with his own hands, was kept by Nokes to his dying day.

It was in the character of Almahide in "The Conquest of Granada," and while wearing her broad-brimmed hat and waist-belt in the prologue to the same play, that Charles became more than ever enamoured of Nelly. A satirist of the time has expressed the result of the performance in a couplet not wholly destitute of force—

> There Hart's and Rowley's souls she did ensnare,
> And made a King a rival to a player;—

while Granville, who enjoyed the friendship of Waller, and lived to be the patron of Pope, has told the result in his poem called "The Progress of Beauty:"

> Granada lost, behold her pomps restor'd,
> And Almahide again by Kings adored.

An effect from a stage performance which some still live to remember, when it found a parallel in the passion which George IV., when Prince of Wales, evinced for Mrs. Robinson, while playing the part of Perdita in "A Winter's Tale." What a true name is Perdita indeed for such a fate, and what a lesson may a young actress learn from the story of poor Mrs. Robinson, when told, as I have heard it told, by her grave in Old Windsor churchyard! Nor is Nelly's story without its moral —and now that we have got her from the purlieus of Drury

Lane, and the contaminations of the green-room,—for the part of Almahide was her last performance on the stage,*—we shall find her true to the King, and evincing in her own way more good than we should have expected to have found from so bad a bringing up.

* The Mrs. Gwyn or Quyn who appeared on the stage while Nelly was alive, was a different person, though hitherto always confounded with her. I had come to this conclusion, when I was pleased to find my conviction made good by a MS. note by Isaac Reed, in his copy of the first edition of the Roscius Anglicanus, in my possession. Downes distinguishes Nelly by calling her "Madam Gwin," or "Mrs. Ellen Gwin;"—the other is always "Mrs. Gwin."

CHAPTER IV.

PERSONAL CHARACTER OF KING CHARLES II.

THE character of King Charles II. has been drawn with care and skill by several writers of distinguished reputation to whom he was known: by the great Lord Clarendon; by the Marquess of Halifax; by the Duke of Buckingham; by Evelyn and Sir William Temple; by Burnet, Dryden, and Roger North. Lord Clarendon had been acquainted with him from his boyhood, and had been his principal adviser for many years; Halifax had been his minister; Buckingham had received distinguished marks of favour at his hands; Evelyn not only frequented his court, but had often conversed with him on matters of moment, and was intimate with many who knew him well; Temple had been his ambassador; Burnet had spoken to him with a freedom which nothing but his pastoral character would have sanctioned; Dryden was his Poet Laureate; and North added to his own his brother the Lord Keeper's experience of the King's character. From such writers as these, and with the aid of such incidental illustrations as a lengthened interest in the subject will supply, I propose to draw the portraiture of the King, using, where such fidelity is requisite, the very words of the authorities I employ.

His personal appearance was remarkable. He was five feet ten inches in height and well-made, with an expression of countenance somewhat fierce, and a great voice.* He was,

* Evelyn, ii. 207, ed. 1850.

says Saville, an illustrious exception to all the common rules of physiognomy; for, with a most saturnine, harsh countenance, he was both of a merry and merciful disposition. His eyes were large and fine; and his face so swarthy, that Monk, before the Restoration, used to toast him as "the black boy."* "Is this like me?" he said to Riley, who had just completed his portrait; then, odd's fish! (his favourite phrase), I am an ugly fellow." Riley, however, must have done him an injustice: certainly, at all events, he is not an ugly fellow on the canvas of Lely, in the miniatures of Cooper, the sculpture of Gibbons, or the coins of Simon.

He lived a Deist, but did not care to think on the subject of religion, though he died professedly a Roman Catholic. His father had been severe with him, and once, while at sermon at St. Mary's in Oxford, had struck him on the head with his staff for laughing at some of the ladies sitting opposite to him.† Later in life the ill-bred familiarity of the Scottish divines had given him a distaste for Presbyterian discipline, while the heats and animosities between the members of the Established Church and the Nonconformists with which his reign commenced made him think indifferently of both. His religion was that of a young prince in his warm blood, whose inquiries were applied more to discover arguments against belief than in its favour. The wits about his Court, who found employment in laughing at Scripture—

All by the King's example liv'd and lov'd—

delighted in turning to ridicule what the preachers said in their sermons before him, and in this way induced him to look upon the clergy as a body of men who had compounded a religion for their own advantage.‡ So strongly did this feeling take

* Hinton's Memoirs, p. 29. † Dr. Lake's Diary, p. 20.

‡ Clarendon's Life, iii. 3, ed. 1826.

root in him, that he at length resigned himself to sleep at sermon time—not even South or Barrow having the art to keep him awake. In one of these half-hours of sleep when in chapel, he is known to have missed, doubtless with regret, the gentle reproof of South to Lauderdale during a general somnolency: —"My lord, my lord, you snore so loud you will wake the King."

He loved ease and quiet; and it was said, not untruly, that there was as much of laziness as of love in all those hours he passed among his mistresses. Few things, remarked Burnet,* ever went near his heart. It was a trouble to him to think. *Unthinkingness*, indeed, was said by Halifax to be one of his characteristics†—and

Unthinking Charles, ruled by unthinking thee,

is a line in Lord Rochester. *Sauntering* is an epithet applied to him by Sheffield, Saville, and Wilmot. He chose rather to be eclipsed than to be troubled, to receive a pension from France rather than ask his Parliament for subsidies.

His affection for his children was worthy of a better man. He loved the Duke of Monmouth with the fondness of a partial parent, and forgave him more than once for injuries, almost amounting to crimes of magnitude, personal and political. The Duke of Grafton, one of his sons by the Duchess of Cleveland, he loved "on the score of the sea," ‡ and for the frankness of his nature. His queen's manners and society he never could have liked, though his letter to Lord Clarendon, written from Portsmouth, upon her first arrival, is ardent in passion, and might have been held to promise the most constant affection for her person.§ He grew at last to believe that she never

* Burnet, ii. 469, ed. 1823. † Halifax, p. 4.

‡ Pepys's Tangier Diary, ii. 36.

§ See it among the Lansdowne MSS. (1236) in the British Museum. It is not fit to print.

could bring him an heir,* an opinion in which he was confirmed by the people about him; but, anxious as he certainly was for another wife, he rejected with scorn a proposition that was made to him to send her away in disguise to a distant region. His steadiness to his brother, though it may and indeed must in a great measure be accounted for on selfish principles, had at least, as Fox remarks, a strong resemblance to virtue.† Prince Rupert he looked upon, not unjustly, as a madman.‡ If he was slow to reward and willing to forgive, he was not prone to forget. His secret service expenses record many payments, and at all periods, to the several branches of the Penderells, to whom he was indebted for his preservation after the battle of Worcester.§

He lived beloved, and died lamented, by a very large portion of his people. What helped to endear him has been happily expressed by Waller:

> ——— the first English born
> That has the crown of these three kingdoms worn.

Then, the way in which he was seen in St. James's Park feeding his ducks;‖ or in the Mall playing a manly game with great skill;¶ or at the two theatres encouraging English authors, and commending English actors and actresses, added to his popularity. He really mixed with his subjects; and though a standing army was first established in his reign, it was needed more for his throne than for his person.

He did not study or care for the state which most of his predecessors before him had assumed, and was fond of drop-

* Clarendon's Life, iii. 60, ed. 1826. † Fox's James II., p. 70.

‡ Pepys's Tangier Diary, ii. 36.

§ Printed for the Camden Society. Mr. Macaulay says, harshly enough—"Never was there a mind on which both services and injuries left such faint and transitory impressions."

‖ Cibber's Apology, p. 26, 8vo, 1740. ¶ Waller's poem "On St. James's Park."

ping the formality of a sovereign for the easy character of a companion. He had lived, when in exile, upon a footing of equality with his banished nobles, and had partaken freely and promiscuously in the pleasures and frolics by which they had endeavoured to sweeten adversity. He was led in this way to let distinction and ceremony fall to the ground, as useless and foppish, and could not even on premeditation, it is said, act for a moment the part of a king either at parliament or council, either in words or gesture. When he attended the House of Lords, he would descend from the throne and stand by the fire, drawing a crowd about him that broke up all the regularity and order of the place. In a very little time he would have gone round the House, and have spoken to every man that he thought worth speaking to.* He carried his dogs to the council table—

> His very dog at council board
> Sits grave and wise as any lord,†

and allowed them to lie in his bed-chamber, where he would often suffer them to pup and give suck, much to the disgust of Evelyn, and of many who resided at court.‡ His very speeches to his parliament contain traits of his personal character. "The mention of my wife's arrival," he says, "puts me in mind to desire you to put that compliment upon her, that her entrance into the town may be with more decency than the ways will now suffer it to be, and for that purpose I pray you would quickly pass such laws as are before you, in order to the amending those ways, and that she may not find Whitehall

* Burnet, i. 472, 3, ed. 1823. In his speech in the House of Commons, March 1, 1661, he says—"In a word, I know most of your faces and names, and can never hope to find better men in your places."

† Lord Rochester's Poem, 1697, p. 150.

‡ Evelyn, vol. ii., p. 207, ed. 1850. Charles was fond of animals and natural history. In the Works Accounts at Whitehall for 1667–8, I observe a payment for "the posts whereon the king's bees stand."

surrounded by water."* Nothing but his character, as Sir Robert Walpole observed of Sir William Yonge, could keep down his parts, and nothing but his parts support his character.

His mistresses were as different in their humours as in their looks. He did not care to choose for himself, so that, as Halifax observes, it was resolved generally by others whom he should have in his arms as well as whom he should have in his councils. Latterly he lived under the traditional influence of his old engagements; and, though he had skill enough to suspect, he had wit enough not to care.† His passion for Miss Stuart, as I have already said, was a stronger feeling of attachment than he is thought to have entertained for any body else.‡

His understanding was quick and lively; but he had little reading, and that tending to his pleasures more than to instruction. He had read men rather than books. The Duke of Buckingham happily characterized the two brothers in a conversation with Burnet:—"The King," he said, "could see things if he would, and the Duke would see things if he could."§ Nor was the observation of Tom Killigrew, made to the King himself in Cowley's hearing, without its point. This privileged wit, after telling the King the ill state of his affairs, was pleased to suggest a way to help all. "There is," says he, "a good honest able man that I could name, whom if your majesty would employ, and command to see things well executed, all things would soon be mended, and this is one Charles Stuart, who now spends his time in employing his lips about the court, and hath no other employment; but if you would give him this employment, he were the fittest man in

* Speech, March 1, 1661-2. See the allusion explained in my "Handbook for London," art. Whitehall.

† Halifax's Character, p. 21.

‡ Clarendon's Life, iii. 61, ed. 1826.

§ Burnet, i. 288, ed. 1823.

the world to perform it."* He had what Sheffield called the *foible* of his family, to be easily imposed upon; for, as Clarendon truly remarks, it was the unhappy fate of the Stuart family to trust too much on all occasions to others.† To such an extent did he carry unnecessary confidence, that he would sign papers without inquiring what they were about.‡

He drew well himself,§ was fond of mathematics, fortification, and shipping; knew the secrets of many empirical medicines, passed many hours in his laboratory, and in the very month in which he died was running a process for fixing mercury.‖ The Observatory at Greenwich, and the Mathematical School at Christ's Hospital, are enduring instances of his regard for science.

He had all the hereditary love of the Stuarts for poetry and poets, and in this respect was certainly different from George II., who considered a poet in the light of a mechanic.¶ He carried Hudibras about in his pocket,** protected its publication by his royal warrant, but allowed its author to starve. Nor was this from want of admiration, but from indolence. Patronage had been a trouble to him. The noble song of Shirley—

> The glories of our blood and state,

was often sung to him by old Bowman, and, while he enjoyed the poetry, he could have cared but little for the moral grandeur which pervades it. He suggested the Medal to Dryden as a subject for a poem while walking in the Mall. "If I was a poet," he said, "and I think I am poor enough to be one, I would write a poem on such a subject in the following man-

* Pepys, 8 Dec., 1666.

† Clarendon's Life, iii. 63, ed. 1826.

‡ Burnet, i. 417, ed. 1823.

§ Walpole's Anecdotes, by Wornum, p. 427.

‖ Burnet, ii. 254, ed. 1823. Among the satires attributed to Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is one on Charles II., called "The Cabin Boy."

¶ Lord Chesterfield's Works, by Lord Mahon, ii. 441.

** Dennis's Reflections on Pope's Essay on Criticism, p. 23.

ner."—Dryden took the hint, carried his poem to the King, and had a hundred broad pieces for it.* A good new comedy, we are told by Dennis, took the next place in his list of likings immediately after his last new mistress. In points connected with the stage he was even more at home than in matters of poetry, insomuch that the particular differences, pretensions, or complaints of the actors were generally ended by the King's personal command or decision.† This, however, he would at times carry to excess, and it has been even said, that "he would hear anybody against anybody." One of his latest acts was to call the attention of the poet Crowne to the Spanish play "No Puedeser; or, It cannot be," and to command him to write a comedy on a somewhat similar foundation. To this suggestion it is that we owe the good old comedy of "Sir Courtly Nice."‡

He hated flattery,§ was perfectly accessible, would stop and talk with Hobbes, or walk through the park with Evelyn, or any other favourite. Steele remembered to have seen him more than once leaning on D'Urfey's shoulder, and humming over a song with him.‖ Hume blames him for not preserving Otway from his sad end; but Otway died in the next reign, more from accident than neglect.

His passion for music (he preferred the violin to the viol) is not ill illustrated in the well-known jingle—

> Four-and-twenty fiddlers all in a row,
> And there was fiddle-fiddle, and twice fiddle-fiddle, &c.,

written on his enlargement of his band of fiddlers to four-and-twenty,—his habit, while at his meals, of having, according to the French mode, twenty-four violins playing before him; ¶ or

* Spence's Anecdotes, p. 171. † Cibber's Apology, p. 75, ed. 1740.

‡ Crowne's Preface to Sir Courtly Nice, 4to, 1685.

§ Temple's Works, ii. 409, ed. 1770. ‖ The Guardian.

¶ Antony A. Wood's Life, ed. Bliss, 8vo, p. 70.

by his letters written during his exile. "We pass our time as well as people can do," he observes, "that have no more money, for we dance and play as if we had taken the Plate fleet"; * "Pray get me pricked down," he adds in another, "as many new corrants and sarabands and other little dances as you can, and bring them with you, for I have got a small fiddler that does not play ill." †

Like others of his race, like James I. and James V. of Scotland, like his father and his grandfather, he was occasionally a poet. A song of his composition is certainly characteristic of his way of life: —

I pass all my hours in a shady old grove,
But I live not the day when I see not my love;
I survey every walk now my Phillis is gone,
And sigh when I think we were there all alone;
O then, 'tis O then, that I think there's no hell
Like loving, like loving too well.

But each shade and each conscious bow'r when I find,
Where I once have been happy, and she has been kind
When I see the print left of her shape on the green,
And imagine the pleasure may yet come again;
O then 'tis I think that no joys are above
The pleasures of love.

While alone to myself I repeat all her charms,
She I love may be lock'd in another man's arms,
She may laugh at my cares, and so false she may be,
To say all the kind things she before said to me:
O then, 'tis O then, that I think there's no hell
Like loving too well.

But when I consider the truth of her heart,
Such an innocent passion, so kind without art;

* Mis. Aulica, p. 117.

† Ellis's Letters, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 376, and Mis. Aul. p. 155.

I fear I have wronged her, and hope she may be
So full of true love to be jealous of me :
And then 'tis I think that no joys are above
The pleasures of love.*

That he understood foreign affairs better than all his councils and counsellors put together was the repeated remark of the Lord Keeper Guildford. In his exile he had acquired either a personal acquaintance with most of the eminent statesmen in Europe, or else from such as could instruct him he had received their characters:—and this knowledge, the Lord Keeper would continue, he perpetually improved by conversing with men of quality and ambassadors, whom he would sift, and by what he obtained from them ("possibly drunk as well as sober"), would serve himself one way or other. "When they sought," his lordship added, "to sift him—who, to give him his due, was but too open—he failed not to make his best of them." †

His love of wine was the common failing of his age. The couplet which I shall have occasion hereafter to include among his happy replies—

Good store of good claret supplies everything,
And the man that is drunk is as great as a king,

affords no ill notion of the feeling current at Whitehall. When the Duke of York, after dinner, asked Henry Saville if he intended to invite the King to the business of the day, Saville wondered what he meant, and incurred the displeasure of the Duke by continuing the King in the belief that hard-drinking was the business before them.‡

* From Choice Ayres, Songs, &c., 1676, folio; see also Roger North's Memoirs of Musick, 4to, 1846, p. 104; Hawkins's History of Music, v. 447; and Park's ed. of Walpole's Royal and Noble Authors, i. 154.

† North, ii. 102, ed. 1826.

‡ Lady R. Russell's Letters, by Miss Berry, p. 177.

His great anxiety was the care of his health, thinking it, perhaps, more reconcileable with his pleasures than he really found it. He rose early, walked generally three or four hours a day by his watch, and when he pulled it out skilful men, it is said, would make haste with what they had to say to him. He walked so rapidly with what Teonge calls "his wonted large pace," * that it was a trouble, as Burnet observes, for others to keep up with him. This rapid walk gives a sting to the saying of Shaftesbury, that "he would *leisurely* walk his Majesty out of his dominions," † while it explains his advice to his nephew Prince George of Denmark, when he complained to Charles of growing fat since his marriage, "Walk with me, hunt with my brother, and do justice on my niece, and you will not be fat." ‡

His ordinary conversation—and much of his time was passed in "discoursing," §—hovered too frequently between profanity and indecency, and in its familiarity was better adapted to his condition before he was restored than afterwards. Yet it had withal many fascinations of which the best talker might be proud—possessing a certain softness of manner that placed his hearers at ease, and sent them away enamoured with what he said.‖ When he thought fit to unbend entirely he exhibited great quickness of conception, much pleasantness of wit, with great variety of knowledge, more observation and truer judgment of men than one would have imagined by so careless and easy a manner as was natural to him in all he said or did.¶ Such at least is the written opinion of Sir William Temple. His speech to La Belle Stuart, who resisted all his importunities,—that he hoped he should live to see her "ugly and willing;" **—his letter to his sister on hearing of her preg-

* Teonge's Diary, p. 232.
† Sprat's Account of the Rye House Plot.
‡ Antony A. Wood's Life, ed. Bliss, p. 260.
§ North's Lives, ed. 1826, ii.
‖ Burnet, ii. 467, ed. 1823.
¶ Temple, ii. 408, ed. 1770.
** Lord Dartmouth's note in Burnet, i. 436, ed. 1823.

nancy,* and his speech to his wife, "You lie: confess and be hanged,"† must be looked upon in connexion with the outspoken language of his age—an age in which young women, even of the higher classes, conversed without circumspection and modesty, and frequently met at taverns and common eating-houses. ‡

"If writers be just to the memory of King Charles II.," says Dryden, addressing Lord Halifax, "they cannot deny him to have been an exact knower of mankind, and a perfect distinguisher of their talents." "It is true," he continues, "his necessities often forced him to vary his counsellors and counsels, and sometimes to employ such persons in the management of his affairs who were rather fit for his present purpose than satisfactory to his judgment; but where it was choice in him, not compulsion, he was master of too much good sense to delight in heavy conversation; and, whatever his favourites of state might be, yet those of his affection were men of wit." §

He was an admirable teller of a story, and loved to talk over the incidents of his life to every new face that came about him. His stay in Scotland, his escape from Worcester, and the share he had in the war of Paris, in carrying messages from the one side to the other, were his common topics. He went over these in a very graceful manner, but so often and so copiously, says Burnet, that all those who had been long accustomed to them were soon weary, and usually withdrew, so that he often began them in a full audience, and before he had done, there were not above four or five left about him. But this general unwillingness to listen is contradicted by Sheffield, who observes that many of his ministers, not out of flattery, but for the pleasure of hearing it, affected an ignorance of what they had heard him relate ten times before, treating a story of

* Dalrymple's Memoirs, Appendix, p. 21, ed. 1773. † Pepys.

‡ Clarendon's Life, i. 358, ed. 1826. § Dryden—Dedication of King Arthur, 4to, 1691.

his telling as a good comedy that bears being seen often, if well acted. This love of talking made him, it is said, fond of strangers who hearkened to his stories and went away as in a rapture at such uncommon condescension in a king; while the sameness in telling caused Lord Rochester to observe, that "he wondered to see a man have so good a memory as to repeat the same story without losing the least circumstance, and yet not remember that he had told it to the same persons the very day before."*

He was undisturbed by libels; enjoying the severities of Wilmot, enduring and not resenting the bitter personalities of Sheffield.† To have been angry about such matters had been a trouble; he therefore let them alone, banishing Wilmot only for a time for a libel which he had given him on himself, and rewarding Sheffield for a satire unsurpassed for boldness in an age of lampoons. He was compared to Nero, who sung while Rome was burning, and pardoned the malice of the wit in the satire of the comparison. He loved a laugh at court as much as Nokes or Tony Leigh did upon the stage.

> Yet he would laugh at his best friends, and be
> Just as good company as Nokes or Leigh.‡

Few indeed escaped his wit, and rather than not laugh he would turn the laugh upon himself.

Words or promises went very easily from him,§ and his memory was only good in such matters as affection or caprice might chance to determine. Had he been less "unthinking," we should have had an epic from the muse of Dryden, "but

* Burnet, i. 458, ed. 1823.

† Lord Rochester to Saville relative to Mulgrave's Essay on Satire. (Malone's Life of Dryden, p. 134.) See also Burnet, i. 433, ed. 1823.

‡ Mulgrave's "Essay on Satire." Mr. Bolton Corney in vol. iii. p. 162, of Notes and Queries, has in a most unanswerable manner vindicated Mulgrave's claim to the authorship of this satire.

§ Burnet, ii. 466.

being encouraged only with fair words from King Charles II.," writes the great poet, "my little salary ill paid, and no prospect of a future subsistence, I was thus discouraged in the beginning of my attempt." If we lost King Arthur, we gained Absalom and Achitophel. Thus discouraged, Dryden took to temporary subjects, nor let us regret the chance that drove him from his heroic poem.

Among the most reprehensible of the minor frailties of his life, for which he must be considered personally responsible, was his squandering on his mistresses the 70,000*l.* voted by the House for a monument to his father, and his thrusting the Countess of Castlemaine into the place of a Lady of the Bedchamber to his newly-married wife. The excuse for the former fault, that his father's grave was unknown, was silly in the extreme, and has since been proved to be without foundation; while his letter in reply to the remonstrance of Lord Clarendon, not to appoint his mistress to a place of honour in the household of his wife, assigns no reason for such a step, while it holds out a threat of everlasting enmity should Clarendon continue to oppose his will.*

One of his favourite amusements was fishing, and the Thames at Datchet one of his places of resort. Lord Rochester alludes to his passion for the sport in one of his minor poems,† and among his household expenses is an allowance to his cormorant keeper for his repairing yearly into the north parts of England "to take haggard cormorants for the King's disport in fishing."‡ His fancy for his ducks was long per-

* See it in Lister's Life of Clarendon, vol. iii. p. 202.

† State Poems, 8vo. 1697, p. 43. Reresby's Memoirs, 8vo. 1735, p. 100. Lord Rochester's Poem in a MS. of the time, is headed "Flatfoot, the Gudgeon Taker." (MS. in possession of R. M. Milnes, Esq., M. P., ii. 240.) "1 July, 1670. Little was done all day [at Windsor] but going a fishing. At night the Duchess of Portsmouth came. In the morning I was with the King at Mrs. Nell's."—*Henry Sidney Lord Romney's Diary*, i. 20.

‡ Audit Office Enrolments, (MSS.) vi. 326.

petuated in the public accounts, as Berenger observed, when a century after he was making his inquiries at the Mews for his History of Horsemanship. Struck by the constant introduction of a charge for hemp-seed, he was led at last to inquire for what purpose the seed was wanted. That none was used, was at once admitted, but the charge had been regularly made since the reign of Charles II., and that seemed sufficient reason for its continuance in the Mews accounts.* Many an abuse has been perpetuated on no better grounds.

Such was Charles II.;

> Great Pan who wont to chase the fair
> And loved the spreading oak; †

and such are the materials from which David Hume and Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Fox and Mr. Macaulay, have drawn in part their characters of the King. But there are other materials for a true understanding of the man,

> A merry monarch, scandalous and poor,

and these are his sayings, which Walpole loved to repeat, and of which I have made a collection in the following chapter.

* Nichols's Tatler, 8vo, 1786, vol. iii. p. 361.

† Addison "To Sir Godfrey Kneller."

CHAPTER V.

THE SAYINGS OF KING CHARLES II.

"I HAVE made a collection," said Walpole, "of the witty sayings of Charles II., and a collection of *bon-mots* by people who only said one witty thing in the whole course of their lives."* Both these collections are, it is believed, unfortunately lost. The former deficiency I have however attempted to supply (I fear imperfectly) in the following chapter; regarding remarkable sayings as among the very best illustrations of individual character and manners.

The satirical epitaph written upon King Charles II. at his own request,† by his witty favourite the Earl of Rochester, is said to be not more severe than it is just:

> Here lies our sovereign lord the King,
> Whose word no man relies on;
> Who never said a foolish thing,
> And never did a wise one.

How witty was the reply. "The matter," he observed, "was easily accounted for—his discourse was his own, his actions were his ministry's."‡

A good story of the King and the Lord Mayor of London at a Guildhall dinner has been preserved to us in the Spectator. The King's easy manner, and Sir Robert Viner's due sense of

* Walpoliana, vol. i. p. 58.

† So Sir Walter Scott in Misc. Prose Works, vol. xxiv. p. 171—but upon what authority?

‡ Hume's History of England, viii. 212.

city hospitality, carried the dignitary of Guildhall into certain familiarities not altogether graceful at any time, and quite out of character at a public table. The King, who understood very well how to extricate himself from difficulties of this description, gave a hint to the company to avoid ceremony, and stole off to his coach, which stood ready for him in Guildhall Yard. But the Mayor liked his Majesty's company too well, and was grown so intimate that he pursued the merry sovereign, and, catching him fast by the hand, cried out with a vehement oath and accent, "Sir, you shall stay and take t'other bottle." "The airy monarch," continues the narrator of the anecdote, "looked kindly at him over his shoulder, and with a smile and graceful air (for I saw him at the time and do now), repeated this line of the old song:

He that's drunk is as great as a king,*

and immediately turned back and complied with his landlord."† This famous anecdote is importantly illustrated by a letter from the Countess Dowager of Sunderland to her brother Henry Sidney, written five years after the mayoralty of Sir Robert Viner.‡ The King had supped with the Lord Mayor; and the aldermen on the occasion drank the King's health over and over upon their knees, wishing every one hanged and damned that would not serve him with their lives and fortunes. But this was not all. As his guards were drunk, or said to be so, they would not trust his Majesty with so insecure an escort, but attended him themselves to Whitehall, and, as the lady-writer observes, "all went merry out of the King's cellar." So

* In Tate's Cuckold's Haven, 4to, 1685, is the following couplet:

Good store of good claret supplies every thing,
And the man that is drunk is as great as a king.

† Spectator, No. 462.

‡ Letter of March 12 [1679–80], in Henry Sidney's Diary, &c. vol. i. p. 300.

much was this accessibility of manner in the King acceptable to his people, that the Mayor and his brethren waited next day at Whitehall to return thanks to the King and Duke for the honour they had done them, and the Mayor confirmed by this reception was changed from an ill to a well affected subject.

It was an age of nicknames—the King himself was known as "Old Rowley," in allusion to an ill-favoured but famous horse in the Royal Mews. Nor was the cognomen at all disagreeable to him. Mrs. Holford, a young lady much admired by the King, was in her apartments singing a satirical ballad upon *Old Rowley the King*, when he knocked at her door. Upon her asking who was there, he, with his usual good humour, replied, "Old Rowley himself, madam."* Hobbes he called "the Bear." "Here comes the Bear to be baited," was his remark, as soon as he saw the great philosopher surrounded by the wits who rejoiced in his conversation.† A favourite yacht received from him the name of *Fubbs*—in honour of the Duchess of Portsmouth, who was become notably plump in her person.‡ The queen he called "a bat," in allusion to her short, broad figure, her swarthy complexion, and the projection of her upper lip from a protuberant foretooth.§

His politeness was remarkable, and he could convey a rebuke in the style of a wit and a gentleman. When Penn stood before him with his hat on—the King put off his. "Friend Charles," said Penn, "why dost thou not keep on thy hat?" "'Tis the custom of this place," replied the monarch, "that only one person should be covered at a time."‖ The well-known English schoolmaster, Busby, excused himself to the King for wearing his hat in his Majesty's presence in his own school at

* Granger's Biog. Hist. iv. 50, ed. 1775.

† Aubrey's Life of Hobbes. See also Tom Brown, i. 174, "King Charles II. compared old Hobbes to a bear."

‡ Hawkins's History of Music, iv. 359, n.

§ Lord Dartmouth in Burnet, i. 299, ed. 1823.

‖ Grey's Hudibras, i. 376.

Westminster—"If I were seen without my hat, even in the presence of your Majesty, the boys' respect for me would certainly be lessened." The excuse, such is the tradition at Westminster, was at once admitted, and Busby wore his hat before the King, as he still is seen to wear it in his portrait in the Bodleian.

When reprimanded by one of his courtiers for loading or interlarding his discourse with unnecessary oaths, he defended himself by saying, "Your martyr swore twice more than ever I did."* And, in allusion again to his father's character, he observed to Lord Keeper Guildford, who was musing somewhat pensively on the woolsack, "My Lord, be of good comfort, I will not forsake my friends as my father did."† To Reresby he remarked, "Do not trouble yourself; I will stick by you and my old friends, for if I do not I shall have nobody stick to me;" and on another occasion he said to the same memorialist, "Let them do what they will, I will never part with any officer at the request of either House; my father lost his head by such compliance, but as for me, I intend to die another way."‡

While Prince, seeing a soldier of the parliament—one of Cromwell's officers, and one active against the King—led through the streets of Oxford as a prisoner, he asked what they designed to do with him. They said they were carrying him to the King, his father; "Carry him rather to the gallows and hang him up," was the reply; "for if you carry him to my father he'll surely pardon him."§ This was assuredly not cruelty in Charles—but merely an odd specimen of his ever playful temperament.

* Rev. Mr. Watson's Apology for his conduct on Jan. 30, 8vo, 1756, p. 34, and Malone's Shakespeare, by Boswell, iii. 235.

† North, i. 387.

‡ Reresby's Memoirs, ed. 1735, pp. 103, 105.

§ Dr. Lake's Diary in Camden Miscellany, vol. i.

He was altogether in favour of extempore preaching, and was unwilling to listen to the delivery of a written sermon. Patrick excused himself from a chaplaincy, "finding it very difficult to get a sermon without book."* On one occasion the King asked the famous Stillingfleet, "How it was that he always read his sermons before him, when he was informed that he always preached without book elsewhere?" Stillingfleet answered something about the awe of so noble a congregation, the presence of so great and wise a prince, with which the King himself was very well contented. "But pray," continued Stillingfleet, "will your Majesty give me leave to ask you a question? Why do you read your speeches when you have none of the same reasons?" "Why truly, doctor," replied the King, "your question is a very pertinent one, and so will be my answer. I have asked the two Houses so often and for so much money, that I am ashamed to look them in the face."† This "slothful way of preaching," for so the King called it, had arisen during the civil wars; and Monmouth, when Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, in compliance with the order of the King, directed a letter to the University that the practice of reading sermons should be wholly laid aside. ‡

When Cosins, Bishop of Durham, reminded the King that he had presumed to recommend Sancroft and Sudbury as chaplains to his Majesty, the King replied, "My Lord, recommend two more such to me, and I will return you any four I have for them." §

One of his replies to Sir Christopher Wren is characteristic both of the monarch and his architect. The King was inspecting the new apartments which Wren had built for him in his hunting-palace in Newmarket, and observed that "he thought the rooms too low." Sir Christopher, who was a little man,

* Patrick's Autobiography, p. 66.

† Richardsoniana, p. 89.

‡ Wilkins's Concilia, iv. 594.

§ Dr. Lake's Diary in Camden Miscellany, vol. i.

walked round them, and looking up and about him, said, "I think, and it please your Majesty, they are high enough." Charles, squatting down to his architect's height, and creeping about in this whimsical posture, cried, "Aye, Sir Christopher, I think they are high enough." *

The elder Richardson was fond of telling a characteristic story of the King and kingly honour. A cutpurse, or pick-pocket, with as much effrontery of face as dexterity of finger, had got into the drawing-room on the King's birthday, dressed like a gentleman, and was detected by the King himself taking a gold snuff-box out of a certain Earl's pocket. The rogue, who saw his sovereign's eye upon him, put his finger to his nose, and made a sign to the King with a wink to say nothing. Charles took the hint, and, watching the Earl, enjoyed his feeling first in one pocket and then in another for his missing box. The King now called the nobleman to him: "You need not give yourself," he said, "any more trouble about it, my Lord, your box is gone; I am myself an accomplice:—I could not help it, I was made a confidant." †

Of his graver and deeper remarks Dryden has preserved a specimen. "I remember a saying," writes the poet, "of King Charles II. on Sir Matthew Hale (who was, doubtless, an uncorrupted and upright man), that his servants were sure to be cast on any trial which was heard before him; not that he thought the judge was possibly to be bribed, but that his integrity might be too scrupulous; and that the causes of the crown were always suspicious when the privileges of subjects were concerned." ‡ The wisdom of the remark as respects Sir Matthew Hale, is confirmed by Roger North: "If one party was a courtier," says North, "and well dressed, and the other a sort of puritan, with a black cap and plain clothes, Hale insensibly

* Richardsoniana, p. 187.

† Richardsoniana, p. 103.

‡ Dryden's Prose Works, by Malone, iv. 156.

thought the justice of the cause with the latter."* Nor has it passed without the censure of Johnson: "A judge," said the great Doctor, "may be partial otherwise than to the Crown; we have seen judges partial to the populace."†

His easy, gentlemanlike way of expressing disapprobation is exemplified in a saying to which I have already had occasion to refer: "Is that like me?" he asked Riley the painter, to whom he had sat for his portrait—"then, odds fish! I am an ugly fellow."‡

When told that the Emperor of Morocco had made him a present of two lions and thirty ostriches, he laughed and said, "He knew nothing more proper to send by way of return than a flock of geese."§

Of Harrow Church, standing on a hill and visible for many miles round, he is said to have remarked "that it was the only *visible* church he knew;"‖ and when taken to see a fellow climb up the outside of a church to its very pinnacle and there stand on his head, he offered him, on coming down, a patent to prevent any one doing it but himself.¶

"Pray," he said at the theatre, while observing the grim looks of the murderers in Macbeth, "pray what is the reason that we never see a rogue in a play, but, odds fish! they always clap him on a black perriwig, when it is well known one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one?" The allusion was, it is asserted, to Oates, but, as I rather suspect, to Shaftesbury. The saying, however, was told by Betterton to Cibber.**

He was troubled with intercessions for people who were

* North, i. 119.

† Boswell, by Croker, p. 448, ed. 1848.

‡ Walpole's Anecdotes.

§ Reresby's Memoirs, ed. 1735, p. 132.

‖ Remarks on Squire Ayre's Life of Pope. 12mo, 1745, p. 12.

¶ Horace Walpole, in Gent.'s Mag. for January, 1848.

** Cibber's Apology, ed. 1740, p. 111.

obnoxious to him, and once when Lord Keeper Guildford was soliciting his favour on behalf of one he did not like, he observed facetiously, "It is very strange that every one of my friends should keep a tame knave."*

One day while the King was being shaved, his impudent barber observed to him that "he thought none of his Majesty's officers had a greater trust than he." "Oy," said the King, "how so, friend?" "Why," said the barber, "I could cut your Majesty's throat when I would." The King started up and said, "Odds fish! that very thought is treason; thou shalt shave me no more."† The barber of Dionysius, who had made the same remark, was crucified for his garrulity; but honest Rowley was not cruel. His loquacious barber was only dismissed. "Falsehood and cruelty," he said to Burnet, "he looked on as the greatest crimes in the sight of God."‡

Of Woolley, afterwards Bishop of Clonfert, he observed wittily and with great knowledge of character, that "He was a very honest man, but a very great blockhead—that he had given him a living in Suffolk, swarming with Nonconformists—that he had gone from house to house and brought them all to Church—that he had made him a Bishop for his diligence; but what he could have said to the Nonconformists he could not imagine, except he believed that his nonsense suited their nonsense."§

On one occasion when unable or unwilling to sleep, he was so much pleased with a passage in a sermon by South, that he laughed outright, and turning to Laurence Hyde Lord Rochester, "Odds fish! Lory," said he, "your chaplain must be a Bishop, therefore put me in mind of him next vacancy."‖ Of

* North's Lives, ii. 247, ed. 1826. † Richardsoniana, p. 106.

‡ Burnet, ii. 169, ed. 1823.

§ Burnet, i. 449, ed. 1823. The story is spoilt in Walpoliana, i. 58.

‖ Biographia Britannica, *art.* "South."

Barrow, he said that "he was an unfair preacher,"* because, as it has been explained, he exhausted every subject and left no room for others to come after him;—but the King's allusion was made somewhat slyly to the length as well as excellence of Barrow's sermons. †

He said often "He was not priest-ridden: he would not venture a war nor travel again for any party."‡ Such is Burnet's story, curiously confirmed as it is by Sir Richard Bulstrode's conversation with the King on his former exile and the then condition of the country. "I," said the King, most prophetically indeed, "am weary of travelling—I am resolved to go abroad no more; but when I am dead and gone, I know not what my brother will do. I am much afraid that when he comes to the crown he will be obliged to travel again." §

He observed, in allusion to the amours of the Duke of York and the plain looks of his mistresses, that "he believed his brother had his favourites given him by his priests for penance." ‖

After taking two or three turns one morning in St. James's Park, the King, attended only by the Duke of Leeds and Lord Cromarty, walked up Constitution Hill into Hyde Park. Just as he was crossing the road, where Apsley House now is, the Duke of York, who had been hunting that morning on Hounslow Heath, was seen returning in his coach, escorted by a party of the Guards, who, as soon as they perceived the King, suddenly halted, and stopped the coach. The Duke being acquainted with the occasion of the halt, immediately got out, and after saluting the King, said he was greatly surprised to find his Majesty in that place, with so small an attendance, and that he thought his Majesty exposed himself to some danger.

* Life in Biographia Britannica.

† Biographia Britannica, *art.* "Barrow."

‡ Burnet, i. 356, ed. 1823.

§ Sir Richard Bulstrode's Memoirs, p. 424.

‖ Burnet, i. 288, ed. 1823.

"No kind of danger, James," was the reply: "for I am sure no man in England will take away my life to make you King." The old Lord Cromarty often mentioned this anecdote to his friends.*

"It is better to be envied than pitied," was his observation to Lord Chancellor Clarendon. †

"He that takes one stone from the Church, takes two from the Crown," was another of his sayings preserved by Pepys. ‡

He said to Lauderdale, "To let Presbytery go, for it was not a religion for gentlemen." §

That "God would not damn a man for a little irregular pleasure," he observed in one of his free discourses with Burnet on points of religion. ‖

If his short characters of men were in common at all like the one that has been preserved to us of Godolphin, we have lost a good deal by the lack of reporters. Of Godolphin, when only a page at court, he said, "that he was never *in* the way, and never *out* of the way;" ¶ and this was a character, says Lord Dartmouth, which Godolphin maintained to his life's end.

When told by Will. Legge, that the pardoning of Lord Russell would, among other things, lay an eternal obligation upon a very great and numerous family, he replied, with reason on his side, "All that is true; but it is as true, that if I do not take his life he will soon have mine." **

Eager for the marriage of the Princess Mary to the Prince of Orange, on being reminded of his promise to the Duke of York (to whom the match was unwelcome), that he would not dispose of the daughter, without the father's consent, he replied

* King's Anecdotes of his Own Times, p. 61.

† Clarendon's Own Life, i. 412, ed. 1827.

‡ Pepys, 29 March, 1669.

§ Burnet, i. 184, ed. 1823.

‖ Burnet, ii. 23, ed. 1823.

¶ Lord Dartmouth in Burnet, ii. 240, ed. 1823.

** Lord Dartmouth's note in Burnet, ii. 370, ed. 1823.

it was true he had given his brother such a promise, "but, odds fish! he *must* consent."* After the marriage the King entered their room as soon as they were in bed, and drawing the curtains, cried out to the Prince—it is the chaplain who tells the story, an archdeacon and prebendary of Exeter, whose words I would fain quote in full—"Now, Nephew. Hey! St. George for England!"†

When Sancroft, dean of St. Paul's, was brought to Whitehall by Will. Chiffinch, that Charles might tell him in person of his appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury, the dean urged his unfitness for that office, and requested his Majesty to bestow it on some more worthy person. The King replied, "that, whether he would accept the Primacy or not, his deanery was already given to Dr. Stillingfleet."‡

When Sir John Warner turned Papist he retired to a convent, and his uncle, Dr. Warner, who was one of the King's physicians, upon apprehension that Sir John might convert his property to popish uses, pressed his Majesty to order the Attorney-General to proceed at law for securing his estate to himself, as next male heir; "Sir John at present," said the King, "is one of God Almighty's fools, but it will not be long before he returns to his estate, and enjoys it himself."§

One of his last sayings related to his new palace at Winchester. Impatient to have the works finished, he remarked that, "a year was a great time in his life."‖

When he was on his death-bed the Queen sent him a message that she was too unwell to resume her post by the couch, and implored pardon for any offence which she might unwittingly have given. "She asks my pardon, poor woman!" cried Charles. "I ask hers with all my heart."

* Lord Dartmouth's note in Burnet, i. 118, ed. 1823.

† Dr. Lake's Diary in Camden Miscellany, vol. i.

‡ Ibid.

§ Secret History of Whitehall.

‖ North, ii. 105, ed. 1826.

In almost his last moments he apologised to those who had stood round him all night for the trouble he had caused. "He had been," he said, "a most unconscionable time dying; but he hoped that they would excuse it."* A similar feeling ruffled the last moments of the polite Earl of Chesterfield, whose only expressed anxiety related to his friend Dayrolles being in the room without a chair to sit down upon.

If he was ready at a reply there were others about him who were not less happy. When he called Lord Chancellor Shaftesbury, in his own hearing, "The greatest rogue in England," the reply was—"Of a subject, Sir, perhaps I am."† Not less witty was the sarcastic answer of the Lord Dorset, to whom I have already introduced the reader, as a lover of Nell Gwyn. The Earl had come to court on Queen Elizabeth's birthday, long kept as a holiday in London and elsewhere, and still, I believe, observed by the benchers of Gray's Inn. The King, forgetting the day, asked "What the bells rung for?" The answer given, the King asked further, "How it came to pass that her birthday was still kept, while those of his father and grandfather were no more thought of than William the Conqueror's?" "Because," said the frank peer to the frank King, "she being a woman chose men for her counsellors, and men when they reign usually choose women."‡ Of the same stamp was the more than half-heard *aside* of the Duke of Buckingham, to an appeal to the monarch "as the father of his people." "Of a good many of them," whispered the author of the Rehearsal.

I have referred in a former chapter to the King's partiality for his dogs; one species of which is still celebrated among the *fancy* as King Charles's breed. On the occasion of an entry

* Macaulay, i. 439.

† Preserved by the witty Lord Chesterfield. Works by Lord Mahon, ii. 334.

‡ Richardsoniana.

into Salisbury, an honest Cavalier pressed forward to see him, and came so near the coach that his Majesty cautioned the poor man not to cling too close to the door lest one of the little black spaniels in the coach should chance to bite him. The loyalist still persisting in being near, a spaniel seized him by the finger, and the sufferer cried with a loud voice, "God bless your Majesty, but G—d d—n your dogs."* This story has been preserved to us by the mercurial Duke of Wharton as an illustration of the indulgence which the King accorded to his subjects on all occasions,—as an instance of the popular, easy, and endearing arts which ensure to a monarch the love and goodwill of his people.—But his best saying was his last,—"Let not poor Nelly starve!" and this, the parting request of the Merry Monarch, reminds us, that it is time once more to return to Nelly.

* Duke of Wharton's Works.

CHAPTER VI.

Birth of the Duke of St. Alban's—Arrival of Mademoiselle de Quérouaille—Death of the Duchess of Orleans—Nelly's house in Pall Mall—Countess of Castlemaine created Duchess of Cleveland—Sir John Birkenhead, Sir John Coventry, and the Actresses at the two Houses—Insolence of Dramatists and Actors—Evelyn overhears a conversation between Nelly and the King—The Protestant and Popish Mistresses—Story of the Service of Plate—Printed Dialogues illustrative of the rivalry of Nelly and the Duchess of Portsmouth—Madame Sevigne's account of it—Story of the Smock—Nelly in mourning for the Cham of Tartary—Story of the two Fowls—Portsmouth's opinion of Nelly—Concert at Nell's house—The Queen and la Belle Stuart at a Fair disguised as Country Girls—Births, Marriages, and Creations—Nelly's disappointment—Her witty Remark to the King—Her son created Earl of Burford, and betrothed to the daughter and heiress of Vere, Earl of Oxford.

On the 8th of May, 1670, while the court was on its way to Dover to receive and entertain the Duchess of Orleans, Nell Gwyn was delivered of a son in her apartments in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The father was King Charles II. and the son was called Charles Beauclerk. The boy grew in strength and beauty, and became a favourite with his father. Where the child was christened, or by whom he was brought up, I have failed in discovering. There is reason to believe that Sir Fleetwood Sheppard, the friend of the witty Earl of Dorset, was his tutor, and that the poet Otway was in some way connected with his education.* To Sheppard one of the best of the minor poems of Prior is addressed.

In the suite of followers attending the beautiful Duchess of Orleans to Dover came Louise Renée de Penencourt de Qué-

* Then for that cub her son and heir,
Let him remain in Otway's care.

Satire on Nelly. Harl. MS. 7319, *fol.* 135.

rouaille, a girl of nineteen, of a noble but impoverished family in Brittany. She was one of the maids of honour to the Duchess, and famous for her beauty, though of a childish, simple, and somewhat baby face.* Charles, whose heart was formed of tinder, grew at once enamoured of his sister's pretty maid of honour. But Louise was not to be caught without conditions affecting the interests of England. While the court stayed at Dover was signed that celebrated treaty by which England was secretly made subservient to a foreign power, and her King the pensioner of Louis XIV. When this was done, Clarendon was living in exile, and the virtuous Southampton, and the all-powerful Albemarle were in their graves. I cannot conceal my opinion that Nokes was not making the French so ridiculous at Dover (the reader will remember the incident related in a former chapter) as the French were making the English infamous, at the same time and in the same place, by this very treaty.

The Duchess remained here for a fortnight, and Waller sung her leave-taking in some of his courtly and felicitous couplets. It was indeed a last farewell. In another month the royal lady by whom the treaty was completed was no more. She died at St. Cloud on the 30th of June, in her twenty-sixth year, poisoned, it is supposed, by a dose of sublimate given in a glass of succory-water. †

Louise de Quérouaille, abiding in England, became the mistress of the King, Duchess of Portsmouth, and the rival of Nell Gwyn. Her only child by the King was recognised by the royal name of Lennox, created Duke of Richmond, and was the lineal ancestor of the present noble family of that name and title.

* Such is Evelyn's description, confirmed by the various portraits of her preserved at Hampton Court Palace, at Goodwood, the seat of the Duke of Richmond, &c.

† See Bossuet's account of her death in Gentleman's Magazine for August, 1851.

On the return of the court to London, Nelly removed from Lincoln's Inn Fields to a house on the east end of the north side of Pall Mall, from whence in the following year she removed to a house on the south side, with a garden towards St. James's Park. Her neighbour on one side was Edward Griffin, Esq., Treasurer of the Chamber, and ancestor of the present Lord Braybrooke; and, on the other, the widow of Charles Weston, third Earl of Portland.* Nelly at first had only a lease of the house, which, as soon as she discovered, she returned the conveyance to the King, with a remark characteristic of her wit and of the monarch to whom it was addressed. The King enjoyed the joke, and perhaps admitted its truth, so the house in Pall Mall was conveyed *free* to Nell and her representatives for ever. The truth of the story is confirmed by the fact that the house which occupies the site of the one in which Nelly lived, now No. 79, and tenanted by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, is the only freehold on the south or Park side of Pall Mall.†

For some months preceding the retirement of Nelly from the stage, the palace of Whitehall had hardly been a place for either the wife or the mistress—the Queen or the Countess of Castlemaine. The King, in November, 1669, when his intimacy with "Madam Gwin," as she was now called, had begun to be talked about, had settled Somerset House, in the Strand, on his Queen for her life; and, in August, 1670, when his liking for Nelly was still on the increase, and his growing partiality for Louise de Quérouaille the theme of common conversation, the imperious Countess of Castlemaine was appeased, for a time, at least, by being created Duchess of Cleveland.

There were people, however, and those too not of the sourer

* Cunningham's Handbook for London, article "Pall Mall."

† It is right to add, as Mr. Fearnside has kindly informed me, that no entry of the grant is to be found in the Land Revenue Record Office.

kind, who were far from being pleased with the present state of the morality at court, and the nature and number of the King's amours. The theatres had become, it was said, nests of prostitution. In Parliament it was urged by the opponents of the court that a tax should be levied on the playhouses. This was of course opposed; and by one speaker on that side the bold argument was advanced, "that the players were the King's servants, and a part of his pleasure." The speaker was Sir John Birkenhead, a man of wit, though not over lucky on this occasion. He was followed by Sir John Coventry, who asked, with much gravity, "whether did the King's pleasure lie among the men that acted or the women?" The saying was carried to the King, and Sir John Coventry was waylaid on his road to his house in Suffolk Street, on a dark night in December, and his nose cut to the bone that he might remember the offence he had given to his sovereign. The allusion chiefly applied to Moll Davis and Nell Gwyn, and was made in the very year in which the latter gave birth to the Duke of St. Alban's; while the punishment was inflicted in the very street in which Moll Davis lived. *

The players and dramatic writers required looking after. Shadwell brought Sir Robert Howard on the stage in the character of Sir Positive Atall, and in so marked a manner that the caricature was at once apparent. Mrs. Corey (of whom I have already given some account) imitated the oddities of Lady Harvey,† and was imprisoned for her skill and impertinence. Lacy, while playing the Country Gentleman in one of Ned Howard's unprinted plays, abused the court with so much wit and insolence for selling places, and doing every thing for money, that it was found proper to silence the play, and commit

* Burnet, i. 468, ed. 1823. He was taken out of his coach (Reresby, p. 18, ed. 1735). The well known Coventry Act against cutting and maiming had its origin in this incident.

† Pepys, 15 Jan. 1668–9.

Lacy to the Porter's Lodge.* Kynaston mimicked Sir Charles Sedley, and was severely thrashed by Sedley for his pains.† The Duke of Buckingham, while busy with "The Rehearsal," threatened to bring Sir William Coventry (uncle of Sir John) into a play at the King's House, but Coventry's courage averted the attempt.‡ He challenged the Duke for the intended insult, and was committed to the Tower by the King for sending a challenge to a person of the Duke's distinction.

Charles's conduct was in no way changed by the personality of the abuse employed against him in the House of Commons. He still visited

His Clevelands, his Nells, and his Carwells.

Evelyn records a walk made on the 2nd March, 1671, in which he attended him through St. James's Park, where he both saw and heard "a familiar discourse between the King and Mrs. Nelly, as they called an impudent comedian, she looking out of her garden on a terrace at the top of the wall, and the King standing on the green walk under it." The garden was attached to her house in Pall Mall, and the ground on which Nelly stood was a Mount or raised terrace, of which a portion may still be seen under the park wall of Marlborough House. Of this scene, at which Evelyn tells us he was "heartily sorry," my friend Mr. Ward has painted a picture of surprising truthfulness and beauty.§

When this interview occurred the King was taking his usual quick exercise in the park, on his way to the Duchess of Cleveland, at *Berkshire House*—subsequently, and till within these few years, called *Cleveland House*—a detached mansion

* Burnet, iv. 18, 19. † Pepys, 1 Feb. 1668–9. ‡ Pepys, 4 March, 1688–9.

§ In Ravenscroft's London Cuckolds (4to. 1683) is the following stage direction—"Dashwell and Jane upon a mount, looking over a wall that parts the two gardens," p. 73. Among Mr. Robert Cole's Nell Gwyn Papers (Bills sent to Nelly for payment) there is a charge for this very Mount.

built by the Berkshire branch of the Howard family, on the site of the present Bridgewater House. Charles at this time divided his attentions between Nelly and the Duchess. Moll Davis had fallen out of favour, though not forsaken or unpensioned:—while many open and almost avowed infidelities on the part of the Duchess of Cleveland had lessened the kindly feelings of the King towards her; though he continued to supply ample means for the maintenance of the rank to which his partiality had raised her.* Poor Alinda, however, was no longer young, and the memory of old attractions could make but little way with Charles against the wit and beauty of Nell Gwyn, and the engaging youth and political influences of the new maid of honour, Louise de Quérouaille, or Mrs. Carwell as she was called by the common people, to whom the name offered many difficulties for its proper pronunciation.

There is no reason to suspect that either Nelly or Louise was ever unfaithful to the light-hearted King, or that Charles did not appreciate the fidelity of his mistresses. The people (it was an age of confirmed immorality) rather rejoiced than otherwise at their sovereign's loose and disorderly life. Nelly became the idol of "the town," and was known far and near as the Protestant Mistress; while Mrs. Carwell, or the Duchess of Portsmouth as she had now become, was hated by the people, and was known, wherever Nelly was known, as the Popish Mistress. It is this contrast of position which has given to Nell Gwyn much of the odd and particular favour connected with her name. Nelly was an English girl—of humble origin—a favourite actress—a beauty, and a wit. The Duchess was

* She had 6000*l.* a year out of the excise, and 3000*l.* a year from the same quarter for each of her sons. (Harl. MS. 6013, temp. Chas. II.) Her pension from the Post Office, of 4700*l.* a year, was stopped for a time in William the Third's reign; but the amount then withheld was paid in George the First's reign to her son the Duke of Grafton, sole executor and residuary legatee. (Audit Office Enrolments.)

a foreigner—of noble origin—with beauty certainly, but without wit; and, worse still, sufficiently suspected to be little better than a pensioner from France, sent to enslave the English King and the English nation. To such a height did this feeling run that Misson was assured hawkers had been heard to cry a printed sheet, advising the King to part with the Duchess of Portsmouth, or to expect most dreadful consequences.* While a still stronger illustration of what the people thought of the Duchess is contained in the reply of her brother-in-law, the Earl of Pembroke, of whom the Duchess had threatened to complain to the King. The Earl told her that if she did he would set her upon her head at Charing Cross, and show the nation its grievance.†

A feeling of antipathy between Protestants and Roman Catholics was at this time exciting the people to many ridiculous pageants and expressions of ill-will to those about the Court suspected of anti-Protestant principles. A True Blue Protestant poet was a name of honour, and a Protestant sock a favourite article of apparel.‡ When Nelly was insulted in her coach at Oxford by the mob, who mistook her for the Duchess of Portsmouth, she looked out of the window and said, with her usual good humour, "Pray, good people, be civil; I am the Protestant ——." This laconic speech drew upon her the favour of the populace, and she was suffered to proceed without further molestation.§

An eminent goldsmith of the early part of the last century

* Misson's Memoirs, 8vo. 1719, p. 204.

† Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting, ed. Wornum, p. 464.

‡ Shadwell was called the True Blue Protestant poet; for the Protestant sock, see Scott's Dryden.

§ The great Lord Peterborough, when mistaken for the Duke of Marlborough, made a similar escape. "Gentlemen, I can convince you by two reasons that I am not the Duke. In the first place, I have only five guineas in my pocket; and in the second they are heartily at your service."

was often heard to relate a striking instance which he himself remembered of Nelly's popularity. His master, when he was an apprentice, had made a most expensive service of plate as a present from the King to the Duchess of Portsmouth: great numbers of people crowded the shop to see what the plate was like; some indulged in curses against the Duchess, while all were unanimous in wishing the present had been for the use of Mrs. Gwyn.* With the London apprentices, long an influential body both east and west of Temple Bar, Nell was always a favourite.

She and the Duchess frequently met at Whitehall, often in good humour, but oftener not in the best temper one with the other, for Nelly was a wit and loved to laugh at her Grace. The nature of these bickerings between them has been well but coarsely described in a single half-sheet of contemporary verses printed in 1682—"A Dialogue between the Duchess of Portsmouth and Madam Gwyn at parting." The Duchess was on her way to France, I believe for the first time since she landed at Dover, and the language employed by the rival ladies is at least characteristic. Nelly vindicates her fidelity—

> Let Fame, that never yet spoke well of woman,
> Give out I was a strolling —— and common;
> Yet have I been to him, since the first hour,
> As constant as the needle to the flower.

The Duchess threatens her with the people's "curse and hate," to which Nell replies:—

> The people's hate, much less their curse, I fear;
> I do them justice with less sums a-year.
> I neither run in court nor city's score,
> I pay my debts, distribute to the poor.

* The London Chronicle—Aug. 15, 18, 1778.

Another single sheet in folio, dated a year earlier, records "A pleasant Battle between Tutty and Snapshort, the two Lap-Dogs of the Utopian Court." Tutty belonged to Nell Gwyn, and Snapshort to the Duchess, and the dialogue is supposed to allude to some real fray between the rival ladies. Tutty describes the mistress of Snapshort as one of Pharaoh's lean kine, and with a countenance so sharp as if she would devour him as she had devoured the nation, while Snapshort observes of Nelly that she hopes to see her once more upon a dunghill, or in her old calling of selling oranges and lemons.

But a still livelier description has been left us by one of the most charming of lady letter-writers:—"Mademoiselle amasses treasure," says Madame Sevigné, "and makes herself feared and respected by as many as she can; but she did not foresee that she should find a young actress in her way, whom the King dotes on, and she has it not in her power to withdraw him from her. He divides his care, his time, and his wealth between these two. The actress is as haughty as Mademoiselle; she insults her, she makes grimaces at her, she attacks her, she frequently steals the King from her, and boasts whenever he gives her the preference. She is young, indiscreet, confident, wild, and of an agreeable humour. She sings, she dances, acts her part with a good grace; has a son by the King, and hopes to have him acknowledged. As to Mademoiselle she reasons thus: 'This lady,' says she, 'pretends to be a person of quality; she says she is related to the best families in France: whenever any person of distinction dies she puts herself into mourning. If she be a lady of such quality, why does she demean herself to be a courtezan? She ought to die with shame. As for me it is my profession. I do not pretend to be anything better. He has a son by me; I contend that he ought to acknowledge him, and I am assured he will; for he loves me as well as Mademoiselle.'"

The good sense of this is obvious enough; but the satire which it contains will be found to merit illustration.

There is a very rare print of the Duchess of Portsmouth reclining on a mossy bank, with very little covering over her other than a laced chemise. There is also an equally rare print of Nelly in nearly the same posture, and equally unclad. The story runs that Nell had contrived to filch the chemise from the Duchess, and by wearing it herself at a time when the Duchess should have worn it, to have attracted the King, and tricked her rival.*

There is yet another story illustrative of Madame Sevigné's letter. The news of the Cham of Tartary's death reached England at the same time with the news of the death of a prince of the blood in France. The Duchess appeared at Court in mourning—so did Nelly. The latter was asked in the hearing of the Duchess, for whom *she* appeared in mourning. "Oh!" said Nell, "have you not heard of my loss in the death of the Cham of Tartary." "And what relation," replied her friend, "was the Cham of Tartary to you?" "Oh," answered Nelly, "exactly the same relation that the Prince of —— was to M'lle. Quérouaille." This was a saying after the King's own heart.

Another of her retorts on the Duchess has been preserved in a small chap-book called "Jokes upon Jokes," printed in London about the year 1721. Its doggrel hobbles thus:—

The Duchess of Portsmouth one time supped with the King's Majesty;
Two chickens were at table, when the Duchess would make 'em three.
Nell Gwyn, being by, denied the same; the Duchess speedily
Reply'd here's one, another two, and two and one makes three.

'Tis well said, lady, answered Nell: O King, here's one for thee,
Another for myself, sweet Charles, 'cause you and I agree;
The third she may take to herself, because she found the same:
The King himself laughed heartily, whilst Portsmouth blush'd for shame.

* Morse's Catalogue of Prints, made by Dodd, the auctioneer, by whom they were sold in 1816.

It was on a somewhat similar occasion that Nell called Charles the Second *her* Charles the *third*—meaning that her first lover was Charles Hart, her second Charles Sackville, and her third Charles Stuart. The King may have enjoyed the joke, for he loved a laugh, as I have before observed, even at his own expense.

What the Duchess thought of such jokes, was no secret to De Foe. "I remember," (he says,) "that the late Duchess of Portsmouth in the time of Charles II. gave a severe retort to one who was praising Nell Gwyn, whom she hated. They were talking of her wit and beauty, and how she always diverted the King with her extraordinary repartees, how she had a fine mien and appeared as much the lady of quality as anybody. "Yes, madam," said the Duchess, "but anybody may know she has been an orange-wench by her swearing." *

Of her manner in diverting the King, Cibber has preserved a story from the relation of Bowman the actor, who lived to a green old age, and from whom Oldys picked up some characteristic anecdotes. Bowman, then a youth, and famed for his voice, was appointed to take part in a concert at the private lodgings of Mrs. Gwyn; at which were present the King, the Duke of York, and one or two more usually admitted to those detached parties of pleasure. When the music was over, the King gave it extraordinary commendations. "Then, sir," said the lady, "to show that you do not speak like a courtier, I hope you will make the performers a handsome present." The King said he had no money about him, and asked the Duke if he had any. "I believe, sir," (answered the Duke,) "not above a guinea or two." Merry Mrs. Nell, turning to the people about her, and making bold with the King's common expression, cried "Odds fish! what company am I got into?" †

* De Foe's Review, viii. 247-8, as quoted in Wilson's Life of De Foe, i. 38.

† Cibber's Apology, ed. 1740, p. 448. Bowman died 23 March, 1739, aged 88.

What the songs at Nell's concert were like we may gather from Tom D'Urfey, a favourite author for finding words to popular pieces of music. His "Joy to great Cæsar" was much in vogue :—

Joy to great Cæsar,
Long life, love, and pleasure ;
'Tis a health that divine is,
Fill the bowl high as mine is,
Let none fear a fever,
But take it off thus, boys ;
Let the King live for ever,
'Tis no matter for us boys—*

No less was the chorus of a song in his "Virtuous Wife."

Let Cæsar live long, let Cæsar live long,
For ever be happy, and ever be young ;
And he that dares hope to change a King for a Pope,
Let him die, let him die, while Cæsar lives long.

If these were sung, as I suspect they were, at Nelly's house, it was somewhat hard that the King had nothing to give, by way of reward, beyond empty praise for so much loyalty in what was at least meant for verse.

There were occurring in England at this time certain events of moment to find places either in the page of history or biography; but in many of which "the chargeable ladies about the Court," as Shaftesbury designated the King's mistresses, would probably take very little interest. The deaths of Fairfax or St. John, of Clarendon or Milton, of the mother of Oliver Cromwell or of the loyal Marquess of Winchester (all of which happened during the time referred to in the present chapter), would hardly create a moment's concern at Whitehall. The news of a second Dutch war might excite more, as it involved an expense likely to divert the King's money from his mis-

* D'Urfey's Pills, ii. 155.

tresses. Greater interest, we may be sure, was felt in the death of the Duchess of York and the speculations on the subject of her successor, in Blood's stealing the Crown, in the opening of a new theatre in Dorset Gardens, in the representation of "The Rehearsal," in the destruction by fire of the first Drury Lane, and in the marriage of the King's eldest child by the Duchess of Cleveland, to Thomas Lord Dacre afterwards Earl of Sussex.

While "The Rehearsal" was drawing crowded houses,— indeed in the same month in which it first appeared,— Nell Gwyn was delivered (25 Dec. 1671) of a second child by the King, called James, in compliment to the Duke of York. The boy thrived, and as he grew in strength became, as his brother still continued, a favourite with his father. The Queen, long used to the profligate courses of her husband, had abandoned all hope of his reformation, so that a fresh addition to the list of his natural children caused no particular emotion. Her Majesty moreover enjoyed herself after an innocent fashion of her own, and at times in a way to occasion some merriment in the court. One of her adventures in the company of La Belle Stuart and the Duchess of Buckingham (the daughter of Sir Thomas Fairfax) deserves to be related. The court was at Audley End in the autumn of 1670, and the temptation of a fair in the neighbourhood induced the Queen and several of her attendants to visit it in disguise. They therefore dressed themselves like country girls, in red petticoats and waistcoats. Sir Bernard Gascoign rode on a cart-jade before the Queen, another gentleman in like fashion before the Duchess of Richmond, and a Mr. Roper before the Duchess of Buckingham. Their dresses, however, were, it is said, so much overdone, that they looked more like mountebanks than country clowns, and they were consequently followed as soon as they arrived at the fair by a crowd of curious people. The Queen, stepping into a

booth to buy a pair of yellow stockings for her sweetheart, and Sir Bernard asking for a pair of gloves, striped with blue, for his sweetheart, they were at once detected by their false dialect and gibberish. A girl in the crowd remembered to have seen the Queen at dinner, and at once made known her discovery. The whole concourse of people were soon collected in one spot to see the Queen. It was high time therefore to get their horses and return to Audley End. They were soon remounted and out of the fair, but not out of their trouble, for as many country-people as had horses followed with their wives, children, sweethearts, or neighbours behind them, and attended the Queen to the court gate. "And thus," says the writer to whom we are indebted for the relation of the adventure, "was a merry frolic turned into a penance." * The readers of Pepys and De Grammont will remember that La Belle Jennings had a somewhat similar mishap when, dressed as an orange girl and accompanied by Miss Price, she endeavoured to visit the German fortune-teller.

While the court was alternately annoyed and amused with diversions of this description, and the death of the Earl of Sandwich and the war with the Dutch were still subjects of conversation, the Duchess of Cleveland on the 16th of July, 1672, was delivered of a daughter, and on the 29th of the same month and year the fair Quérouaille produced a son. The King disowned the girl but acknowledged the boy, and many idle conjectures were afloat both in court and city on the subject. The father of the Cleveland child was, it is said, Colonel Churchill, afterwards the great Duke of Marlborough, then a young and handsome adventurer about Whitehall. The girl was called Barbara, after her mother, and became a nun.

These events were varied in the following month by the

* Mr. Henshaw to Sir Robert Paston, Oct. 13, 1670. Ives's Select Papers, 4to. 1773, p. 39.

marriage of the Duke of Grafton, the King's son by the Duchess of Cleveland, to the only child of the Earl and Countess of Arlington; by the birth of a first child to the Duke and Duchess of Monmouth; and by the widowhood in December of La Belle Stuart, the beautiful Duchess of Richmond. In the following year other occurrences took place in which Nelly was interested. On the 19th August, 1673, Mademoiselle de Quérouaille was created Duchess of Portsmouth, and in October following, Moll Davis, her former rival in the royal affections, was delivered of a daughter, called Mary Tudor, and acknowledged by the King. Following hard on these was the marriage of the Duke of York to his future queen; the introduction of the opera into England; the opening of the new theatre in Drury Lane; the marriage of the future Earl of Lichfield to Charlotta, another natural daughter of the King by the Duchess of Cleveland; the creation of Charles Fitzroy to be Duke of Southampton; the marriage of the Duchess of Portsmouth's sister to the Earl of Pembroke; Lord Buckhurst's elevation to the earldom of Middlesex; that of the King's son by Katharine Pegg to be Earl of Plymouth; and that of the Duchess of Portsmouth's son to be Duke of Richmond.

Some of these creations, both natal and heraldic, were little to the liking of Nelly, who took her own way of showing her dissatisfaction. "Come hither, you little bastard," she cried to her son Charles in the hearing of his father.* The King remonstrated, and Nelly, with a snappish and yet good-natured laugh, replied—"I have no better name to call him by." Never was a peerage sought in so witty and abrupt a manner, and never was a plea for one so immediately admitted, the King creating his eldest son by Nell Gwyn, on the 27th December, 1676, Baron of Headington and Earl of Burford. Nelly had now another name to give to her child. But this was not all

* Granger, iii. 211, ed. 1779.

that was done, and, as I see reason to believe, at this time. The heiress of the Veres, the daughter of the twentieth and last Earl of Oxford of that illustrious family, was betrothed by the King to the young Earl of Burford; and, though the lively orange-girl was not spared to witness the marriage, yet she lived to see the future wife of her son in the infancy of those charms which made her one of the most conspicuous of the Kneller Beauties, still so attractive in the collection at Hampton Court.*

* When Dugdale was busy with his "Baronage," he laid the following statement of difficulties before the King.

"Whereas the second volume of an Historicall Worke, intituled the Baronage of England (being extracted from publiq records, and other authorities) is now in the presse; and extending from the end of K. Henry the Third's reigne containeth what is most memorable of the English Nobility throughout all times since; in w^ch the preambles of most Creation Patents have been usefull. Descending down to the reign of this king, the Author humbly concieveth, that there is some deficiency in that of the Duke of Monmouth's Creation; no mention at all being made that he is his Ma^ties naturall son, though in some patents, and other instruments since, he hath been owned so to be. In that also of the Countesse of Castlemaine, whereby she hath the title of Countesse of Southampton and Dutchesse of Cleveland, conferred on her; her eldest son (on whom those honours are entailed) is denominated Charles Palmer, and George (her third son) to whom, in case Charles die w^thout issue male, the remaynder is limitted, is sayd to be her second son, and likewise surnamed Palmer; but afterwards, upon his being created Earle of Northumberland, called Fitz-roy, and sayd to be her third son. Also in the Creation-Patent of the same Charles, to be Duke of Southampton, the name of Fitz-roy is attributed to him. These things considered, the Author most humbly craveth direction what to do herein; whether to decline the mention of all his Ma^ties creations, rather than from the authoritie of these Patents to divulge such contradictions; though thereby he shall hazard the displeasure of some, whom his Ma^tie hath deservedly raysed to such degrees of honour, since his happy restoration.

"*If it be resolved, that all of them shall be called Fitz-roys;* Then forasmuch as the Duke of Southampton, and Earle of Northumberland, and likewise the Duke of Grafton, are sayd to be the King's naturall sons by the sayd Dutchesse of Cleveland, whether it will not be as proper to make mention on what particular woman his Ma^tie begot the Dukes of Monmouth, Richmond, and E. of Plimouth?

"This being shewed to K. Charles the Second, by the Earl of Anglesey, then L^d Privye Seale, the king directed that these his naturall children should be all of them called *Fitz-Roys*; but no mention to be made of the mothers of these three last-named; viz. Monmouth, Richmond, and Plymouth."—*Hamper's Life of Dugdale*, p. 494.

CHAPTER VII.

Houses in which Nelly is said to have lived—Burford House, Windsor, one of the few genuine—Her losses at basset—Court paid to Nelly by the Duke of Monmouth, Lord Cavendish, &c.—Death of her mother—Printed elegy on her death—Nelly's household expenses—Bills for her chair and bed—Death of Mrs. Roberts—Foundation of Chelsea Hospital—Nelly connected with its origin—Books dedicated to Nelly—Death of her second son—The Earl Burford created Duke of St. Alban's—Nelly's only letter—Ken and Nelly at Winchester—Nelly at Avington—Death of the King—Was the King poisoned?—Nelly to have been created Countess of Greenwich if the King had lived.

THERE are more houses pointed out in which Nell Gwyn is said to have lived than sites of palaces belonging to King John, hunting-lodges believed to have sheltered Queen Elizabeth, or mansions and posting-houses in which Oliver Cromwell resided or put up. She is said by some to have been born at Hereford; by others at London; and Oxford it is found has a fair claim to be considered as her birth-place. But the houses in which she is said to have lived far exceed in number the cities contending for the honour of her birth. She is believed by some to have lived at Chelsea, by others at Bagnigge Wells; Highgate, and Walworth, and Filberts, near Windsor, are added to the list of reputed localities. A staring inscription in the Strand in London instructs the curious passenger that a house at the upper end of a narrow court was "formerly the dairy of Nell Gwyn." I have been willing to believe in one and all of these conjectural residences, but, after a long and careful inquiry, I am obliged to reject them all. Her early life was spent in Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields; her latter life in Pall Mall, and in Burford House in the town of

Windsor.* The rate-books of the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields record her residence in Pall Mall from 1670 to her death, and the site of her house in Windsor may be established, were other evidence wanting, by the large engraving after Knyff.

We have seen from Cibber that Nelly was fond of having concerts at her house, and that she never failed in urging the claims of those who played and sung to the favourable consideration of the King and the Duke of York. She had her basset-table, too, and in one night is said to have lost to the once beautiful Duchess of Mazarine as much as 1400 guineas, or 5000*l.* at least of our present money.† Basset, long the fashionable game, was I believe introduced into this country from France. Etherege and Lady Mary Wortley have sung its attractions and its snares, and D'Urfey has condemned it in one of the best of his plays. Nor will Evelyn's description of the basset-table which he saw on a Sunday night at Whitehall, only a few hours before the King was seized with his last illness, be effaced from the memory of those to whom his work is known.

Nelly possessed great interest with the King, and her house at Windsor, with its staircases painted expressly for her by the fashionable pencil of Verrio,‡ was the rendezvous of all who wished to stand well at the Castle. The Duke of Monmouth, —the handsome Sydney of De Grammont's Memoirs, afterwards Earl of Romney,—and the patriot Lord Cavendish, afterwards Duke of Devonshire, were among Nelly's friends. Such constant court was paid to her for political purposes

* "The Prince of Wales is lodged [at Windsor] in the Princess of Denmark's house, which was Mrs. Ellen Gwyn's." *Letter, Aug.* 14, 1688, *Ellis Corresp.* ii. 118.

† Lucas's Lives of Gamesters, 12mo. 1714. Lord Cavendish lost a thousand pounds in two nights, at Madame Mazarine's. Countess Dowager of Sunderland, to the Earl of Halifax, Aug. 5, 1680:—(Miss Berry's Lady Rachael Russell, p. 373.)

‡ Accounts of the Paymaster of His Majesty's Works and Buildings, preserved in the Audit Office.

by the Duke of Monmouth and Lord Cavendish, that Lady Rachael Russell records the King's command that Nelly should refuse to see them.* Monmouth was endeavouring to regain his situations, of which he had been properly deprived by his father, and Cavendish was urging the claims of the Protestants on behalf of the famous Bill for excluding the Duke of York from the succession to the crown. Nelly, it will be remembered, had already identified herself with the Protestant interest, but the regard with which she was treated by King James is ample evidence that she had never abused her influence, in order to prejudice Charles II. against his brother. Indeed she would appear to have been among the first who foresaw the insane ambition of Monmouth. She is said to have called him "Prince Perkin" to his face, and when the Duke replied that she was "ill-bred,"—"Ill-bred," retorted Nelly, "was Mrs. Barlow better bred than I?"†

I have introduced the mother of Nelly by name to the reader, and I have now to record her death. "We hear," says the 'Domestic Intelligencer' of the 5th of August, 1679, "that Madam Ellen Gwyn's mother, sitting lately by the water-side at her house by the Neat-Houses, near Chelsea, fell accidentally into the water and was drowned." Oldys had seen a quarto pamphlet of the time giving an account of her death. This I have never met with, but among the Luttrell Collection of ballads and broadsides sold at the Stowe sale was an elegy "Upon that never-to-be-forgotten matron Old Madame Gwyn, who died in her own fishpond, 29 July, 1679." The verse is of the lowest possible character of Grub Street elegy, nor could I, after a careful perusal, glean from it any biographical matter other than that she was very fat and fond

* Lady Sunderland to Henry Sydney, 16 Dec. 1679. (Romney's Diary, &c. i. 207.) Lady Rachael Russell to her husband, 3 April, 1680. (Miss Berry's Lady Rachael, pp. 210, 215, 367.)

† Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1851, p. 471.

of brandy. She was buried in the church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and it is said with five gilded scutcheons to the hearse; but this could hardly be, if the ballad-monger's date of the 29th is correct, for the register of St. Martin's records her burial on the 30th, the very next day.* That the old lady resided at one time with her daughter and in her house in Pall Mall, may, I think, be inferred from some curious bills for debts incurred by Nelly, accidentally discovered among the mutilated Exchequer papers: an apothecary's bill containing charges for cordial juleps with pearls for "Master Charles," and "plasters," "glysters," "cordials" for "old Mrs. Gwyn."

From these bills, the originals of which have been kindly entrusted to me by Mr. Loddy and Mr. Robert Cole, some extracts may be made that will interest the reader. The bills are of a very miscellaneous nature—a chance saving from a bundle of household and other expenses of the years 1674, 1675, and 1676. They include charges for a French coach, and for a great cipher from the chariot painter; for a bedstead, with silver ornaments; for side-boxes at the Duke's Theatre, to which she never went alone, but often with as many as four people, Nell paying for all; for great looking-glasses; for cleansing and burnishing the warming-pan; for the hire of sedan-chairs; for dress, furniture, and table expenses; for white satin petticoats, and white and red satin nightgowns; for kilderkins of strong ale, ordinary ale, and "a barrel of eights;" for alms to poor men and women; for oats and beans, and "chaney" oranges at threepence each; "for a fine landskip fan;" for scarlet satin shoes covered with silver lace, and a pair of satin shoes laced over with gold for "Master Charles." One or two of these documents have escaped entire. A bill for her sedan-chair runs as follows:—

* 1679, 30 July. Mrs. Ellinor Gwin, w. *Burial Register of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.* See also Gentleman's Magazine for November, 1851, p. 470.

June 17, 1675.	£	s.	d.
The body of the chaire	3	10	0
the best neats leather to cover the outside . . .	3	10	0
600 inside nailes, coulered and burnishd . . .	0	11	0
600 guilt with water gold at 5*s.* per cent . . .	1	10	0
1200 outside nailes, the same gold, at 8*s.* per cent .	4	16	0
300 studds, the same gold	1	16	0
2000 halfe roofe nailes, the same gold . . .	1	14	0
200 toppit nailes, same gold	3	14	0
5 sprigs for the top, rich guilt	4	0	0
a haspe for the doore, rich guilt	1	10	0
ffor change of 4 glasses	2	0	0
2 pound 5*s.* for one new glasse, to be abated out of that ffor a broken glasse 15*s.*	1	10	0
ffor guilding windows and irons	1	5	0
Serge ffor the bottom	0	2	0
canuisse to put vnder the leather	0	8	0
all sorts of iron nailes	0	5	0
workmanshipe the chaire inside and outside . . .	2	10	0
	34	11	0

Reict. dated 13 July, 1675, for "30£ in full discharge."

That she did not always employ her own sedan is evident from the following bill:—

For careing you to Mrs. Knights and to Madam Younges, and to Madam Churchfillds, and wating four oures	0	5	0
For careing you the next day, and wating seven oures	0	7	6
For careing you to Mrs. Knights, and to Mrs. Cassells, and to Mrs. Churchills, and to Mrs. Knights . .	0	4	0
For careing one Lady Sanes to y^e^ play at White Halle, and wayting	0	3	6
For careing you yesterday, and wayting eleven oures	0	11	6
Y^e^ some is	1	11	6

13 October, 75.

Recd. them of Tho. Groundes in full of these Bills and all other demands from Madam Gwin, £2. —. —

by me William Calow.

Chairman Callow, with singular discreetness, omits, it will be seen, to name the places at which he waited longest. Eleven shillings and sixpence seems very little for carrying and waiting eleven hours. But the most curious bill, and it is one with which I have been only recently supplied, is a silversmith's—in which the principal sum is a charge for making a bedstead for Nelly, with ornaments of silver, such as the King's head, slaves, eagles, crowns, and Cupids, and Jacob Hall dancing upon a rope of wire-work. The document must be given entire: —

Work done for y^e^ righte Hon^ble^. Madame Guinne.
John Cooqūs, siluersmyth his bill.

		£	s.	d.
1674.	Deliuered the head of y^e^ bedstead weighing 885 onces 12 lb. and I haue received 636 onces 15 dweight so that their is over and aboue of me owne siluer two hundred [and] forty eight onces 17 dweight at 7*s.* 11*d.* par once (y^e^ siluer being a d't worse par once according y^e^ reste) wich comes to	98	10	2
	For y^e^ making of y^e^ 636 onces 15 d't at 2*s.* 11*d.* par once, comes to	92	17	3

	onces.	dweight.
Deliuered y^e^ kings head weighing . .	197	5
one figure weighing	445	15
y^e^ other figure with y^e^ caracter weighing .	428	5
y^e^ slaues and y^e^ reste belonging unto it .	255	
y^e^ two Eagles weighing	169	10
one of the crowne[s] weighing . . .	94	5
y^e^ second crown weighing	97	10
y^e^ third crowne weighing	90	2
y^e^ fowerd crowne weighing . . .	82	
one of y^e^ Cupids weighing	121	8
y^e^ second boye weighing	101	10
y^e^ third boye weighing	93	15
y^e^ fowered boye weighing	88	17

Altogether two thousand two hundred sexty fiue onces 2^d^ wight of sterling siluer at 8*s.* par once, comes to	906	0	10

	£	s.	d.
Paid for y^e^ Essayes of y^e^ figures and other things into y^e^ Tower	0	5	0
Paid for iacob haalle [Jacob Hall] dansing upon y^e^ robbe [rope] of Weyer Worck *	1	10	0
For y^e^ cleinsing and brunisching a sugar box, a pepper box, a mustard pott and two kruyzes . .	0	12	0
For mending y^e^ greatte siluer andyrons . . .	0	10	0
Paid to y^e^ cabbenet maker for y^e^ greatte bord for y^e^ head of the bedstead and for y^e^ other bord that comes under it and.....boorring the wholles into y^e^ head	3	0	0
Paid to Mr. Consar for karuing y^e^ said bord . .	1	0	0
For y^e^ bettering y^e^ sodure wich was in the old bedstead	5	3	7
Paid to y^e^ smid for y^e^ 2 yorne hoops and for y^e^ 6 yorn baars krampes and nealles	1	5	0
Paid for y^e^ woodden pied de staall for one of y^e^ figures	0	4	6
Paid y^e^ smith for a hoock to hang up a branche candlestick	0	2	0
Paid to y^e^ smith for y^e^ baars kramps and nealles to hold up y^e^ slaues	0	5	0
Given to me Journey man by order of Madame Guinne	1	0	0
Paid to y^e^ smyth for y^e^ yorn worck to hold up y^e^ Eagles and for y^e^ two hoocks to hold the bedstead again the wall	0	3	0
Paid for y^e^ pied de stalle of Ebony to hold up the two georses	1	10	0
For y^e^ mending of y^e^ goold hower glasse . .	0	2	6
Deliuered two siluer bottels weighing 37 onces 17 d't at 8*s.* par once, comes to	15	2	9
Paid for y^e^ other foot to hold up y^e^ other figure .	0	4	6
For sodering y^e^ wholles and for repairing mending and cleinsing the two figures of Mr. Traherne his making	3	0	0
For y^e^ making of a crowne upon one of y^e^ figures .	1	0	0

* In another bill I observe a charge "for y^e^ cleensing of Jacobs halle of weyer worck."

	£	s.	d.
Giuen to me iourney man by order of Madame Guinne	1	0	0
Deliuered a handel of a kneif weighing 11 dweight more than y^e^ old one wich comes with y^e^ making of it to	0	5	10
For y^e^ cleinsing of eight pictures	0	10	0
In all comes to	£1135	3	1*

And now, quitting Nelly's household and other expenses, it is time to turn to matters of more moment.

In the autumn of 1679 died Mrs. Roberts, the daughter of a clergyman, who had lived with the King, though she is not known to have had any children by him.† She had sent for Burnet when dying, and expressed her sense of sorrow for her past life in so sincere a manner, that he desired her to describe her contrition in a letter to the King. At her request Burnet drew the draft of such a letter, but she never had strength enough to copy it out. Burnet on this wrote in his own name to the King, and sent a strong letter of remonstrance through Will Chiffinch, the keeper of the backstairs. Seldom, indeed, has a sovereign been addressed so boldly as by Burnet in this letter.‡ The King read it twice over, and then threw it in the fire; expressing himself not long after with great sharpness when Burnet's name was mentioned to him. But Charles had his own way, in this life at least, of atoning for his misdeeds, and to one of his best actions he is said to have been instigated by no less a person than Nell Gwyn.

* In the Works' Accounts of the Crown at Whitehall, in 1662–3, is a payment (£53 12*s.* 2*d.*) to Paul Audley "for silvering a rayle to goe about the Duchess of York's bed, with seven pedestals and 60 Ballisters." The bed, as was long the custom, stood in an alcove off and yet in the bed-chamber.

† Unless, indeed, the "Carola Roberts," of the Secret Service Expenses of Charles II. is the daughter of this Mrs. Roberts by the King.

‡ Burnet, i. 457, ii. 287, and vi. 257, Ed. 1823; also Calamy's Life, ii. 83.

This was the erection of a Royal Hospital at Chelsea for aged and disabled soldiers, the first stone of which was laid by the King himself in the spring of 1682. The idea, it is said, originated with Nelly, and I see no reason to doubt the tradition, supported as it is by the known benevolence of her character, her sympathy with the suffering, and the fact that sixty years ago at least Nelly's share in its foundation was recorded beneath her portrait serving as the sign of a public-house adjoining the Hospital.* The sign remains, but not the inscription. Yet the tradition is still rife in Chelsea, and is not soon likely to die out. Ormonds, and Granbys, and Admiral Vernons disappear, but Nelly remains, and long may she swing with her favourite lamb in the row or street commemorated for ever in the Chelsea Pensioners of Wilkie!

There were thousands alive when the Hospital was first thought of, who carried about them marks of service in the recent struggle which distracted the three kingdoms, in a way in which, let us hope, they will never again be made to suffer. There were old men who had fought at Edge Hill and Marston Moor, and younger ones who could show that they had bled at Naseby or at Worcester. The Restoration had witnessed the establishment of a standing army, and many of Cromwell's Ironsides filling the ranks of the Coldstream Guards and Oxford Blues were now unfit for active service, and younger men were required to fill their places. What was to become of the veterans when their pay was gone? Their trade had been war, and their pay never sufficient for more than their immediate wants. But for Chelsea Hospital they might have starved on the casual bounty of the people and the chance assistance of their younger comrades.

In an age when new books were numerous—and few appeared without a dedication—it is natural to infer that Nelly

* Lysons' Environs of London, vol. ii. p. 155.

would not escape. Three dedications to her are known. One in 1674, by Duffet, before his play of "The Spanish Rogue;" a second in 1678, by Whitcombe, before a rare little volume called "Janua Divorum: or the Lives and Histories of the Heathen Gods;" and a third in 1679, by Mrs. Behn, before her play of "The Feigned Courtezans." All are adulatory. Duffet was unknown to her, and he was not certain, he tells us, that Nelly had ever seen his play. It was, however, necessary, he observes, to have a dedication to his book, and he selected "Madam Ellen Gwyn," deeming that "under the protection of the most perfect beauty and the greatest goodness in the world" his play would be safe. "Nature," says Duffet, "almost overcome by Art, has in yourself rallied all her scattered forces, and on your charming brow sits smiling at their slavish toils which yours and her envious foes endure; striving in vain with the fading weak supplies of Art to rival your beauties, which are ever the same and always incomparable." This is highflown enough; but all is not like this; and there is one passage which deserves to be remembered. Nelly, he says, was so readily and frequently doing good, "as if" he observes, "doing good were not her nature, but her business." The person who wrote thus happily had been a milliner in the New Exchange before he took to literature as a profession.

Whitcombe inscribes his book "To the illustrious Madam Ellen Gwyn;" but Aphra Behn, the Astrea of the stage, is still stronger; "Your permission has enlightened me, and I with shame look back on my past ignorance which suffered me not to pay an adoration long since where there was so very much due; yet even now, though secure in my opinion, I make this sacrifice with infinite fear and trembling, well knowing that so excellent and perfect a creature as yourself differs only from the divine powers in this—the offerings made to you ought to be worthy of you, whilst they accept the will alone." Well

might Johnson observe, that in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, Dryden had never been equalled, except by Aphra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. But the arrow of adulation is not yet drawn to the head, and Mrs. Behn goes on to say, "Besides all the charms, and attractions, and powers of your sex, you have beauties peculiar to yourself —an eternal sweetness, youth, and air which never dwelt in any face but yours. You never appear but you glad the hearts of all that have the happy fortune to see you, as if you were made on purpose to put the whole world into good humour." This however is not all, for the strain turns to her children, and her own humility, and is therefore nearer the truth. "Heaven has bestowed on you," adds Aphra, "two noble branches, whom you have permitted to wear those glorious titles which you yourself generously neglected." Two noble branches indeed they were, if the graver of Blooteling, who wrought while Nelly was alive, has not done more than justice to their looks.

Troubles were now surrounding Nelly. At Paris, in September, 1680, died James Lord Beauclerk, her second and youngest son. In the summer of the succeeding year, Lacy, the actor was buried in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, whither she herself was soon to follow. In 1683 died Charles Hart, her old admirer; and in the following year died Major Mohun. A garter and other honours awaited the son of her old rival, the Duchess of Portsmouth. Yet she was still cheerful, and sought even more assiduously for other honours for her only child. Nor was the King unwilling to hearken to the entreaties of Nelly in her boy's behalf. On the 10th of January, 1683–4, eight days after the death of old Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Alban's, the boy Earl of Burford was created Duke of St. Alban's and appointed to the then lucrative offices of Registrar of the High Court of Chancery and Master Falconer of England. The latter office is still enjoyed by the present Duke of St. Albans.

The only letter of Nelly's composition known to exist relates to this period of her life. It is written on a sheet of very thin gilt-edged paper, in a neat, Italian hand, not her own, and is thus addressed :—

"These for Madam Jennings over against the Tub Tavern in Jermyn Street, London.

"*Windsor, Burford House, April* 14, 1684.

"MADAM.—I have received y^r^ Letter, and I desire y^u^ would speake to my Ladie Williams to send me the Gold Stuffe, & a Note with it, because I must sign it, then she shall have her money y^e^ next Day of Mr. Trant ; pray tell her Ladieship, that I will send her a Note of what Quantity of Things I'le have bought, if her Ladieship will put herselfe to y^e^ Trouble to buy them ; when they are bought I will sign a Note for her to be payd. Pray Madam, let y^e^ Man goe on with my Sedan, and send Potvin and Mr. Coker down to me, for I want them both. The Bill is very dear to boyle the Plate, but necessity hath noe Law. I am afraid M^m^. you have forgott my Mantle, which you were to line with Musk Colour Sattin, and all my other Things, for you send me noe Patterns nor Answer. Monsieur Lainey is going away. Pray send me word about your son Griffin, for his Majestie is mighty well pleased that he will goe along with my Lord Duke. I am afraid you are so much taken up with your owne House that you forget my Business. My service to dear Lord Kildare, and tell him I love him with all my heart. Pray M^m^. see that Potvin brings now all my Things with him : My Lord Duke's bed, &c. if he hath not made them all up, he may doe that here, for if I doe not get my Things out of his Hands now, I shall not have them until this time twelvemonth. The Duke brought me down with him my Crochet of Diamonds ; and I love it the better because he brought it. Mr. Lumley and everie body else will tell you that it is the finest Thing that ever was seen. Good M^m^. speake to Mr. Beaver to come down too, that I may bespeake a Ring for the Duke of Grafton before he goes into France.

"I have continued extreme ill ever since you left me, and I am soe still. I have sent to London for a Dr. I believe I shall die. My service to the Duchess of Norfolk and tell her, I am as *sick* as her Grace, but do not know what I ayle, although shee does. . . .

"Pray tell my Ladie Williams that the King's Mistresses are accounted ill paymasters, but shee shall have her Money the next Day after I have the stuffe.

"Here is a sad slaughter at Windsor, the young mens taking y^r^ Leaves and going to France, and, although they are none of my Lovers, yet I am loath to part with the men. Mrs. Jennings I love you with all my Heart and soe good bye.

"E. G."

"Let me have an Answer to this Letter."

This highly characteristic letter was found by Cole, and transmitted to Walpole, who has expressed the delight he felt at its perusal. Who Madam Jennings was I am not aware; nor have I succeeded in discovering anything of moment about Lady Williams. Potvin was an upholsterer.* The Duchess of Norfolk was the daughter and sole heir of Henry Mordaunt Earl of Peterborough, and Nelly would appear to have been on intimate terms with her. When, on account of her Grace's illicit intimacy with Sir John Germain, her divorce from the Duke was before a court of law, Nelly's evidence, imperfectly as it has reached us, was very characteristic of her mode of reply even to an ordinary question. Germain had sought, it appears, to seduce her from the King, and Nell is said to have replied, "she was no such sportsman as to lay the dog where the deer should lie." Sir John Germain, afterwards married to the Duchess, was a Dutch adventurer, of mean extraction, grown rich by gambling. The father of Secretary Craggs was footman to the gallant Duchess.

When the Rye House Plot had given to Charles a great distaste for Newmarket and Audley End, he determined on building a palace at Winchester, and Wren was required to design a structure worthy of the site and the monarch. The works were commenced in earnest, and Charles was often at Winchester watching the progress of the building, and enjoying the sports of the chase in the New Forest, or his favourite

* Privy Purse Expenses of the Reigns of Charles II. and James II. printed by the Camden Society, p. 186. "Tho. Otway" and "Jhon Poietevin" are witnesses to a power of attorney of Nelly's, now in Mr. Robert Cole's possession.

relaxation of fishing in the waters of the Itchin. Nelly accompanied him to Winchester, and on one occasion the pious and learned Ken, then a chaplain to the King, and a prebendary of Winchester, was required to surrender his prebendal house as a lodging for Nelly.* Ken properly remonstrated, and, if it be indeed true that she had taken possession of the assigned lodging, she speedily removed from it.† Nor was the King displeased with the firmness displayed by this exemplary man. He knew that Ken was right; appreciated his motives; and one of his last acts was to make the very person by whom he was thus so properly admonished Bishop of Bath and Wells, the see of which he chose to be conscientiously deprived, as Sancroft from Canterbury, rather than forget the oath he had taken of fealty to a former sovereign.

Unable to obtain or retain the use of the canonical apartments of the pious Ken, Nelly found quarters in a small attached room of brick at the end of the large drawing-room in the Deanery, still from tradition called "Nell Gwyn"‡ and afterwards at Avington, the seat of the Countess of Shrewsbury, notorious for the part she took in the duel in which her husband was slain by the Duke of Buckingham. Avington lies about three miles to the north-east of Winchester, and before the death of the last Duke of Chandos Nelly's dressing-room was still shown.§ Another attraction of the same house was a fine characteristic portrait, by Lely, of the Countess of Shrewsbury as Minerva, recently sold at the sale at Stowe, whither it had been removed from Avington with the rest of the Chandos property.

Ken's refusal occurred probably during the last visit which

* Hawkins's Life of Ken.

† The tradition at Winchester was, that Nell refused to move, and did not move till part of the roof was taken off. (Bowles's Life of Ken, vol. ii. p. 7.)

‡ Bowles's Life of Ken, vol. ii. p. 56. § Forster's Stowe Catalogue 179.

Nelly was to make to Winchester. The following winter was spent by the court at Whitehall, amid gaieties common to that festive season; and what these gaieties were like we may learn from the picture of a Sunday preserved by Evelyn. "I can never forget," says the high-minded author of Sylva, "the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming, and all dissoluteness, and, as it were, a total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening), which this day se'nnight I was witness of; the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland, Mazarine, &c., a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about twenty of the great courtiers and other dissolute persons were at basset round a large table, a bank of at least £2,000 in gold before them; upon which two gentlemen who were with me made strange reflections. Six days after all was in the dust."* The fatal termination of this Sunday scene was even more sudden than Evelyn has described. The revels extended over Sunday night until the next morning. At eight of that same morning the King swooned away in his chair, and lay for nearly two hours in a state of apoplexy, all his physicians despairing of his recovery. He rallied for a time, regained possession of his intellects, and died, on the following Friday, sensible of his sins, and seeking forgiveness from his Maker. His end was that of a man, never repining that it was so sudden; and his good-nature was exhibited on his death-bed in a thousand particulars. He sought pardon from his queen, forgiveness from his brother, and the excuses of those who stood watching about his bed. What his last words were, is I believe unknown; but his dying requests made to his brother and successor, concluded with "Let not poor Nelly starve;"† a recommendation, says Fox, in his famous introductory chapter, that is much to his honour.

That Charles II. was poisoned was the belief of many at

* Evelyn, 4 Feb. 1684–5.

† Burnet, ii. 460, ed. 1823. Evelyn, 4 Feb. 1684–5.

the time. It was the fashion in that as in the preceding age, to attribute the sudden death of any great person to poison, and the rumour on this occasion should, we suppose, form no exception to the rule of vulgar delusions. Yet in Charles's case the suspicions are not without support from apparently rather weighty authorities. "I am obliged to observe," says Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, "that the most knowing and the most deserving of all his physicians did not only believe him poisoned, but thought himself so too, not long after, for having declared his opinion a little too boldly."* Bishop Patrick strengthens the supposition, from the testimony of Sir Thomas Mellington, who sat with the King for three days, and never went to bed for three nights.† *The* Chesterfield, who lived among many who were likely to be well informed, and was himself the grandson of the Earl of Chesterfield who was with Charles at his death, states positively that the King was poisoned.‡ The Duchess of Portsmouth, when in England, in 1699, is said to have told Lord Chancellor Cowper that Charles II. was poisoned at her house by one of her footmen in a dish of chocolate,§ and Fox had heard a somewhat similar report from the family of his mother, who was great-grand-daughter to the Duchess.‖ The supposed parallel cases of the deaths of Henry Prince of Wales and King James I. are supported by no testimony so strong as that advanced in the case of Charles II.

Had the King lived, Nelly was to have had a peerage for herself, and the title chosen was that of Countess of Greenwich.¶ This of course she was not now likely to obtain—

* Buckingham's Works, ii. 82. 8vo. 1729.

† Bishop Patrick's Autobiography, p. 101.

‡ Letters to his Son.

§ Dean Cowper in Spence's Anecdotes, ed. Singer, p. 367.

‖ Fox, p. 67.

¶ This I give on the authority of the curious passage in a MS. book by Van Bossen, kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. David Laing. The whole passage is as follows:—

"Charles the 2d. naturall sone of King Charles the 2d. borne of Hellenor or Nelguine,

if indeed she would have cared so to do. Her own end was near.

dawghter to Thomas Guine, a capitane of ane antient family in Wales, who showld bein advanced to be Countes of Greeniez, but hindered by the king's death, and she lived not long after his Matie. Item, he was advanced to the title of Duke Stablane and Earl of Berward. He is not married." ("The Royall Cedar," by Frederick Van Bossen, MS. folio, 1688. p. 129.)

One of the last acts of the antiquarian life of that curious inquirer, Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, was to note down some valuable memoranda for this story of Nell Gwyn. Among other things, Mr. Sharpe directed Mr. Laing's attention to the curious entry in the volume by Van Bossen, still in Mr. Laing's possession.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nelly in real mourning, and outlawed for debt—Death of Otway, tutor to her son—James II. pays her debts—The King's kindness occasions a groundless rumour that she has gone to mass—Her intimacy with Dr. Tenison, then Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and Dr. Lower, the celebrated physician—She sends for Tenison in her last illness—Her death and contrite end—Her will and last request of her son—Her funeral—Tenison preaches her funeral sermon—False account of the sermon cried by hawkers in the streets—The sermon used as an argument against Tenison's promotion to the see of Lincoln—Queen Mary's defence of him and of Nelly—Her son the Duke of St. Alban's—Eleanor Gwyn and Harriet Mellon—Various portraits of Nelly—Further anecdotes—Conclusion.

It was no fictitious mourning, for the Cham of Tartary or a Prince of France, which Nelly and the Duchess of Portsmouth were both wearing in the spring of 1685. Each had occasion, though on very unequal grounds, to lament the monarch so suddenly removed from his gorgeous chambers at Whitehall to the cold damp vaults of Westminster Abbey. It was at this period if not on other occasions, that Nelly must have called to mind Shirley's noble song, which old Bowman used to sing to King Charles:

> The glories of our blood and state
> Are shadows, not substantial things;
> There is no armour against fate:
> Death lays his icy hands on Kings.

Lely should have painted Nelly in her mourning; but the delicate hand which drew with so much grace the Beauties of King Charles the Second's Court, and Nelly with her lamb among them, was lying torpid under the church in Covent Garden, and the painters who succeeded him, Wissing,

Kneller, and Verelst, had little skill in transferring from life to canvas those essential graces of expression which Lely caught so inimitably in his La Belle Hamilton and his Madame Gwyn.

While her grief was still fresh, Nelly had occasion to remember the friend she had lost. The King's mistresses, as Nelly herself informs us, were accounted but ill paymasters, for the King himself was often at a loss for money, and the ladies were, we may safely suppose, generally in advance of the allowances assigned them. The "gold stuff" was indeed scarcer than ever with her in the spring of the year in which the King died, and we know what became of at least some of her plate only a year before. "The bill is very dear," she says, "to boil the plate; but necessity hath no law." What was to be done? shopkeepers were pressing with their bills, and the apprentices who would have at once released "Protestant Nelly" from their own books had no control over those of their masters; so Nelly, if not actually arrested for debt in the spring of 1685, was certainly outlawed for the non-payment of certain bills, for which some of her trades-people, since the death of the King, had become perseveringly clamorous.

Nelly's resources at this period were slender enough. In the King's lifetime, and after Prince Rupert's death, she had paid to Peg Hughes the actress and her daughter Ruperta as much as 4520*l.*, "for the great pearl necklace" which she wears in so many of her portraits.* This would now probably pass to the neck of another mistress (such is the lottery of life and jewels,)—perhaps to that of Katherine Sedley, Countess of Dorchester; but Nelly would not care much about this: it went more to her heart to hear that during her own outlawry for debt her old friend Otway, the tutor of her son—the poet, whose writings she must have loved—had died of starvation,

* Warburton's Prince Rupert, iii. 558.

without a sympathising Nelly near at hand to relieve the wants in which she herself was now participating.*

It was Nelly's good fortune, however, never to be without a friend willing and able to assist her. The new King had not forgotten the dying request of his only brother, "Let not poor Nelly starve:" above all he had not forgotten Nelly's conduct during that hard period of his life when the Bill of Exclusion was pushed in both houses with a warmth and animosity which argued indifferently for his obtaining the crown to which he was entitled. James, though in trouble himself—Monmouth had landed at Lyme, and the battle of Sedgemoor was not yet fought—found time in the midst of his anxieties to attend to his brother's last request; the secret service expenses of the King (only recently brought to light) exhibiting a payment to Richard Graham, Esq., of 729*l.* 2*s.* 3*d.* "to be by him paid over to the several tradesmen, creditors of Mrs. Ellen Gwyn, in satisfaction of their debts for which the said Ellen stood outlawed."†

Nor was this the only way in which James exhibited his regard for Nelly, and his remembrance of a brother to whom he was sincerely attached. In the same year in which he relieved Nelly from her outlawry, two additional payments of 500*l.* each were made to her by way of royal bounty; and two years afterwards the same book of accounts records a payment to Sir Stephen Fox of 1256*l.* 0*s.* 2*d.* for so much by him paid to Sir Robert Clayton, the alderman and great city merchant, in full of 3774*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.* for redeeming the mortgages to Sir John Musters, of Beskwood Park, for settling the same for life upon Mrs. Ellen Gwyn, "and after her death upon the Duke

* Otway died 14 April, 1685. He dedicated his "Venice Preserved" to the Duchess of Portsmouth.

† Secret Service Expenses of Charles II. and James II. (printed for the Camden Society), p. 109.

of St. Alban's, and his issue male, with the reversion in the crown."* Beskwood Park is in the county of Nottingham, on the borders of merry Sherwood, and was long an appurtenance to the Crown, eagerly sought for by royal favourites. Whether it remains in the possession of the present Duke of St. Alban's, as the descendant of Nelly, I am not aware.

James's kindness to Nelly, and his known design of reconciling the nation to the Church of Rome, gave rise to a rumour, perpetuated by Evelyn in his Memoirs, that she at this time "was said to go to mass." He alludes to her conversion in the same brief entry with that of Dryden:—"such proselytes," he adds, "were of no great loss to the Church."† The rumour as to her, however, was untrue. Nelly was firm to the Protestant religion—so firm indeed that her adherence to the faith of our fathers is one of the marked characteristics of her life.

Some strict disciplinarians of the Church will hear perhaps with a smile that Nell Gwyn was troubled at any time with a thought about religion. But their incredulity is uncharitable. Nelly doubtless had her moments of remorse; and, though her warmth in the cause of Protestantism may in the first instance have been strengthened by her hatred to the Duchess of Portsmouth, yet the kindly feeling avowed for her by Tenison, affords surely a strong presumption that her faith was unshaken and her repentance sincere.

It is much to be regretted that we know so little of the life of Archbishop Tenison. He seems to have risen into importance about the year 1680, when he was recommended by Tillotson to the vacant living of St. Martin's in the Fields, in London, then an extensive parish, where, as Baxter described it, "neighbours lived like Americans, without hearing a sermon for many years." Tenison filled his cure at St. Martin's

* Secret Service Expenses, p. 167. † Evelyn, 19 January, 1685–6.

with so much courage, toleration, and discretion in the worst days of the Church, that few, except the extreme partisans of popery, have been found to quarrel with his ministry.* It was as Vicar of St. Martin's, in which parish Pall Mall is situated, that he became acquainted with Nell Gwyn,—perhaps, as I suspect in the first instance, through the instrumentality of Lower, then the most celebrated physician in London.† Dr. Lower was a sturdy Protestant, and one, as King James was known to observe, "that did him more mischief than a troop of horse." He was often with Nelly, and, as Kennet had heard from Tenison's own lips, "would pick out of her all the intrigues of the Court of King Charles II." Nor was his faith questionable, evincing as he did his regard for the Reformation by the bequest of a thousand pounds to the French and Irish Protestants in or near London.‡

But the visits of Lower to Nelly were not for gossip only. She was now far from well, and her complaints were put into rhyme by the satirical pen of Sir George Etherege. There is, however, little wit in this instance, and just as little truth in the malice of the author of "The Man of Mode." One line, however, deserves to be recorded:

Send Dr. Burnet to me or I die.

It was time indeed for Nelly to send for some one. Burnet had attended Rochester, and Mrs. Roberts, and the Whig "martyr," William Lord Russell. Tenison had attended Thynne, Sir Thomas Armstrong, and the unhappy Monmouth. Tenison was sent for, and attended Nelly.

She now made her will, and to the following effect: —

* Compare Burnet in his History with Lord Dartmouth's Notes, and Burnet's own account of Tenison to King William in Romney's Diary, ii. 283. See also Evelyn's Memoirs for a high character of Tenison.

† Burnet, ii. 284, ed. 1823.

‡ Kennet's note in Wood's Ath. Ox., ed. Bliss, iv. 299.

In the name of God, Amen. I, Ellen Gwynne, of the parish of St. Martin-in-the-fields, and county of Middlesex, spinster, this 9th day of July, anno Domini 1687, do make this my last will and testament, and do revoke all former wills. First, in hope of a joyful resurrection, I do recommend myself whence I came, my soul into the hands of Almighty God, and my body unto the earth, to be decently buried, at the discretion of my executors, hereinafter named; and as for all such houses, lands, tenements, offices, places, pensions, annuities, and hereditaments whatsoever, in England, Ireland, or elsewhere, wherein I, or my heirs, or any to the use of, or in trust for me or my heirs, hath, have, or may or ought to have, any estate, right, claim or demand whatsoever, of fee-simple or freehold, I give and devise the same all and wholly to my dear natural son, his Grace the Duke of St. Alban's, and to the heirs of his body; and as for all and all manner of my jewels, plate, household stuff, goods, chattels, credits, and other estate whatsoever, I give and bequeath the same, and every part and parcel thereof, to my executors hereafter named, in, upon, and by way of trust for my said dear son, his executors, administrators, and assigns, and to and for his and their own sole use and peculiar benefit and advantage, in such manner as is hereafter expressed; and I do hereby constitute the Right Hon. Lawrence Earl of Rochester, the Right Hon. Thomas Earl of Pembroke, the Hon. Sir Robert Sawyer, Knight, his Majesty's Attorney General, and the Hon. Henry Sidney, Esq., to be my executors of this my last will and testament, desiring them to please to accept and undertake the execution hereof, in trust as afore-mentioned; and I do give and bequeath to the several persons in the schedule hereunto annexed the several legacies and sums of money therein expressed or mentioned; and my further will and mind, and anything above notwithstanding, is, that if my said dear son happen to depart this natural life without issue then living, or such issue die without issue, then and in such case, all and all manner of my estate above devised to him, and in case my said natural son die before the age of one-and-twenty years, then also all my personal estate devised to my said executors not before then by my said dear son and his issue, and my said executors, and the executors or administrators of the survivor of them, or by some of them otherwise lawfully and firmly devised or disposed of, shall remain, go, or be to my said executors, their heirs, executors, and administrators respectively, in trust of and for answering, paying, and satisfying all and every and all manners of my gifts, legacies, and directions that at any time hereafter, during my life, shall be by me anywise mentioned or given in or by any codicils or schedule to be hereto annexed. And lastly, that my said executors shall have, all and every of them, 100*l.* a-piece, of lawful money, in

consideration of their care and trouble herein, and furthermore, all their several and respective expenses and charges in and about the execution of this my will. In witness of all which, I hereunto set my hand and seal, the day and year first above written. E. G.

Signed, sealed, published and declared, in the presence of us, who at the same time subscribe our names, also in her presence.

Lucy Hamilton Sandys,
Edward Wyborne,
John Warner,
William Scarborough,
James Booth.

To this, three months later, was added a codicil written on a separate sheet of paper, and called:—

The last request of Mrs. Ellen Gwynn to his Grace the Duke of St. Alban's, made October the 18th, 1687.

1. I desire I may be buried in the church of St. Martin's-in-the fields.

2. That Dr. Tenison may preach my funeral sermon.

3. That there may be a decent pulpit-cloth and cushion given to St. Martin's-in-the-fields.

4. That he [the Duke] would give one hundred pounds for the use of the poor of the said St. Martin's and St. James's, Westminster, to be given into the hands of the said Dr. Tenison, to be disposed of at his discretion, for taking any poor debtors of the said parish out of prison, and for cloaths this winter, and other necessaries, as he shall find most fit.

5. That for showing my charity to those who differ from me in religion, I desire that fifty pounds may be put into the hands of Dr. Tenison and Mr. Warner, who, taking to them any two persons of the Roman Religion, may dispose of it for the use of the poor of that religion inhabiting the parish of St. James's aforesaid.

6. That Mrs. Rose Forster may have two hundred pounds given to her, any time within a year after my decease.

7. That Jo., my porter, may have ten pounds given him.

My request to his Grace is, further—

8. That my present nurses may have ten pounds each, and mourning, besides their wages due to them.

9. That my present servants may have mourning each, and a year's wages, besides their wages due.

10. That the Lady Fairborne may have fifty pounds given to her to buy a ring.

11. That my kinsman, Mr. Cholmley, may have one hundred pounds given to him, within a year after this date.

12. That his Grace would please to lay out twenty pounds yearly for the releasing of poor debtors out of prison, every Christmas-day.

13. That Mr. John Warner may have fifty pounds given him to buy a ring.

14. That the Lady Hollyman may have the pension of ten shillings per week continued to her during the said lady's life.

Oct. 18, -87.—*This request was attested and acknowledged, in the presence of us,*

JOHN HETHERINGTON,
HANNAH GRACE,
DANIEL DYER.*

She died of apoplexy in November, 1687,† in her thirty-eighth year, but the exact day is unknown. "Her repentance in her last hours, I have been unquestionably informed," writes Cibber, "appeared in all the contrite symptoms of a Christian sincerity." "She is said to have died piously and penitently," writes Wigmore to Sir George Etherege, then Envoy at Ratisbon, "and, as she dispensed several charities in her lifetime, so she left several such legacies at her death."‡ The bequest to the poor prisoners may receive some illustration from the satires of the time. Her father is said to have died in a prison at Oxford—and Nelly, it is added, "gloried" in relieving the necessities of the poorer prisoners.

* The will was proved, Dec. 7, at the Prerogative Will office in Doctors' Commons, and the original on the 18th of February following delivered to Sir Robert Sawyer, one of the executors.

† Letter of 22 March, 1687, in Ellis's Correspondence, i. 264: "Mrs. Nelly is dying of an apoplexy."

‡ Cibber's Apology, p. 451, ed. 1740. Letter of 18 Nov. 1687, in Seward's Anecdotes. Her wealth in the letter is stated at a million!

On the night of the 17th November, 1687, the orange girl in the playhouse pit—the pretty witty Nelly of Pepys—and the Almahide of Dryden's play and King Charles's admiration, was buried, according to her own request, in the church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. There was no great ostentation on the occasion, considering the style in which funerals were then usually conducted; the expenses of her interment, £375, were advanced by Sir Stephen Fox, from the next quarter's allowance of £1500 a year, which King James had settled upon her.* Good Dr. Tenison too complied with her request, and preached her funeral sermon; but what the Doctor said—except that he said "much to her praise"—no one has told us. The church was doubtless crowded—all the apprentices who could obtain leave from their masters for such a lesson were there, and perhaps many a wet eye was seen,—for Nelly was a good subject, and the then vicar of St. Martin's was an impressive preacher.

It was bold in Tenison to preach such a sermon, and on such a person; but he knew the worth of Nelly and was not afraid. He escaped not, however, without censure. Some mercenary people printed and employed hawkers to cry in the streets a sham, or largely transmogrified discourse which the vicar himself was obliged to denounce as a "forgery."† Others went further; and when in 1691 the see of Lincoln was vacant, and Tenison was all but appointed to it, Viscount Villiers, afterwards the first Earl of Jersey, in his zeal for the rector of the parish of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields, immediately adjoining St. Martin's, made it a reason to Queen Mary for the exclusion of the honest Doctor that he had preached "a notable funeral

* Secret Service Expenses of Charles II., and James II., p. 177.

† *Advertisement.*—Whereas there has been a paper cry'd by some hawkers, as a sermon preached by D. T. at the funeral of M. E. Gwynn, this may certify, that that paper is the forgery of some mercenary people.—*Mr. Pulton consider'd by Tho. Tenison, D.D.* 4to. 1687.

sermon in praise of Ellen Gwyn." But the daughter of King James, and the wife of King William, who had her own channels of information, was not to be led aside from what she knew was right by so weak a complaint, though advanced by a highly-favoured servant of her own. "I have heard as much," said the good Queen Mary to her Master of the Horse, "and this is a sign that the poor unfortunate woman died penitent; for, if I have read a man's heart through his looks, had she not made a truly pious end, the Doctor could never have been induced to speak well of her."* I need hardly add that Tenison obtained the see, and that he lived to fill with honour to himself and service to the Church the more important office of Archbishop of Canterbury. It may, however, be new to some that in his own will he strictly forbids either funeral sermon or oration at his own interment. There is satire in this. To have praised even Tenison might by some courtier or another have been made a barrier to the promotion of an able and perhaps better deserving person.

The son acceded to the dying requests of his mother by the following memorandum beneath the codicil:—

Dec. 5, 1687.—I doe consent that this paper of request may be made a codicil to Mrs. Gwinn's will.

ST. ALBAN'S.

King James continued the mother's pension to the son, and in the same month in which his mother died gave him the colonelcy of that regiment of horse from which Lord Scarsdale had been dismissed, for his opposition to the well-known designs of King James.†

While still young he distinguished himself at the siege of

* Life of Tenison, p. 20. Lord Jersey should have recollected that the father of his own wife was no less a person than the infamous Will. Chiffinch.

† Letter from Atterbury, dated Covent Garden, Dec. 1. 1687. Nichols's Atterbury, Vol. i. p. 1.

Belgrade, became in after-life a Knight of the Garter, and died the father of eight sons by his wife, the high-born and wealthy heiress, Lady Diana de Vere, a beauty included—as I have already observed,—in the Kneller collection at Hampton Court. He died intestate in 1726. His widow survived till 1742. The title still exists—and has been in our own time rather conspicuously before the public from the enormous wealth of the late Harriet, Duchess of St. Alban's, widow of Coutts the banker, but originally known, and favourably too, upon the comic boards. Not unlike in many points were Eleanor Gwyn and Harriet Mellon. The fathers of both were in the army, and both never knew what it was to have a father. Both rose by the stage,—both had wealthy admirers—and both were charitable and generous. Here, however, the parallel ceases. Harriet was no wit, — nor, with all respect for Mr. Coutts's taste, can we well believe that she ever had been a beauty.

There are many portraits of Nell Gwyn—few heads of her time make a more profitable traffic among dealers. Yet very few are genuine. She sat to Lely, to Cooper, and to Gascar. An "unfinished" portrait of her was sold at Sir Peter Lely's sale to Hugh May, for £25.* No. 306 of King James II.'s pictures was "Madam Gwyn's picture, naked, with a Cupid," done by Lely, and concealed by a "sliding piece," a copy by Danckers of the Countess of Dorset, by Van Dyck.† Among the pictures "of Mr. Lely's doing" which Mrs. Beale, the painter, saw at Bap. May's lodgings at Whitehall, in April 1677, was "Mrs. Gwyn, with a lamb, half-length."‡ "Some years since," says Tom Davies, writing in 1784, "I saw at Mr.

* Accounts of Roger North, the executor of Lely. Addit. MS. in Brit. Mus. 16,174.

† Harl. MS. 1890, compare Walpole's edit. Dallaway, iii. 58. There is a unique print of this in the Burney Collection in the British Museum.

‡ Walpole by Dallaway, iii. 140.

Berenger's house in the Mews a picture of Nell Gwyn, said to have been drawn by Sir Peter Lely; she appeared to have been extremely attractive." *

With the single exception of a too grave and thoughtful picture in the Lely room at Hampton Court, there is not a single picture of Nelly in any of the royal collections. When Queen Charlotte was asked whether she recollected a famous picture of Nell Gwyn, known to have existed in the Windsor gallery, and which Her Majesty herself was suspected of having removed, she replied at once "that most assuredly since *she* had resided at Windsor there had been no Nell Gwyn there." †

A full-length portrait of her, in a yellow and blue dress, and black-brown hair, fetched at the Stowe sale 100 guineas, and has been engraved. At Goodwood is a full-length of her, neither clever nor like. Other portraits of her are to be seen at Elvaston, (Lord Harrington's); at Althorp, (Lord Spencer's); at Welbeck, (the Duke of Portland's), in water colours, with her two children; at Sudbury, (Lord Vernon's); and at Oakley Grove, Cirencester, (Lord Bathurst's). That curious inquirer Sir William Musgrave had seen portraits of her at Smeton and at Lord Portmore's at Weybridge. At the Garrick Club is a namby-pamby and pretty small portrait called Nell Gwyn, but surely not Nelly. Marshall Grosvenor had the fine portrait with the lamb, once belonging to the St. Alban's family, and since so finely engraved for Mrs. Jameson's Beauties. "The turn of the neck," says Mrs. Jameson, "and the air of the head, are full of grace and character, and the whole picture, though a little injured by time, is exquisitely painted." A duplicate of this is at Goodrich Court—one of the acquisitions of Sir Samuel Meyrick—the petticoat is of a pink or carmine colour. The portrait at Drayton Manor,

* Davies's Dramatic Miscellanies, iii. 269.

† Mrs. Jameson's Preface to Beauties of the Court of King Charles II.

bought by the late Sir Robert Peel, is also the same as the Grosvenor picture, except that the lamb is omitted.* At Mr. Bernal's, in Eaton Square, is a clever copy of the time, after Lely; and among the miniatures of the Duke of Buccleuch is her head by Cooper, for which it is said the Exchequer papers record the price paid to that painter.

Of the early engravings from her portraits, the best are by Gerard Valck, the brother-in-law of Blooteling. Valck was a contemporary of Nell Gwyn, and fine impressions of his Lely engraving realise high prices; but the print of her which collectors are most curious about is that after Gascar, evidently engraved abroad,—it is thought by Masson, in which she is represented covered by the famous laced chemise, lying on a bed of roses, from which her two children, as Cupids, are withdrawing the curtains—King Charles II. in the distance. She wears as well the famous Rupert necklace of pearls. The Stowe impression—the last sold—brought eight guineas. The Burney copy, now in the British Museum, cost Dr. Burney at Sir Egerton Brydges's sale £39 18*s*. In all her pictures we have what Ben Jonson so much admires—

> Hair loosely flowing, robes as free.

But few—the Lely with the lamb excepted—render justice to those charms of face and figure which her contemporaries loved to admire, and which Lely alone had the skill to transfer even in part to canvas.†

Relics of Nelly are of rare occurrence. A warming-pan said to have been in her possession with, for motto, the slightly modified text, "Fear God and *serve* the King," was in exist-

* Mrs. Jameson's Private Picture Galleries, p. 375.

† For her bust or effigy at Bagnigge Wells see Waldron's ed. of Downes, p. 16, and Gent. Mag. for June, 1835, p. 562. I do not believe in the straight-armed portrait engraved by Van Bleeck and now in Mr. Bernal's possession.

ence at the close of the last century. A looking-glass of great elegance of form, and with a handsomely carved frame with figures, lately, if not still, in the collection of Sir Page Dicks of Port Hall, is said on good authority to have belonged to her. The bills of her household and other expenses, from which I have derived some particulars, are characteristic memorials of her in another way. Till the recent sale of the mutilated Exchequer papers her autograph was not known to exist. She could not sign her name, and was content with an E. G.—many with better opportunities could do no more—dotted at the commencement and termination of each letter, as if she was at a loss where to begin and how to leave off. Not more than ten or twelve of her signatures are known, and these when they have occurred for sale have sold at prices varying from two guineas and a half to three guineas each.

On looking back at what I have written of this *Story*, I see little to omit or add—unless I wander into the satires of the time, and poison my pages with the gross libels of an age of lampoons. Not to have occasioned one satire or even more, would have been to say little for the reputation (of any kind) of a lady who lived within the atmosphere of Whitehall. Like her—

> Who miss'd her name in a lampoon,
> And sigh'd—to find herself decay'd so soon—

Nelly did not escape, and, though the subject of some very gross satires, she had this consolation, if she heeded them at all, that there were others who fared still worse, and perhaps deserved better.* Yet it would be wrong to close any sketch of her life without mentioning the present of the large Bible which she made to Oliver Cromwell's porter, when a prisoner

* Wycherley has "A Song · upon a vain foolish Coxcomb, who was banish'd the Court, for owning a witty Libel written by another."—*Poems*, 1704, p. 319.

in Bedlam,—often referred to by the writers of her age;* her paying the debt of a worthy clergyman whom, as she was going through the city, she saw bailiffs hurrying to prison; or her present to Pat O'Bryan, so characteristically related in the following quotation:—

"Afterwards Pat O'Bryan, scorning to rob on foot, he would become an absolute highway-man, by robbing on horseback. The first prey he met was Nell Gwyn; and stopping her coach on the road to Winchester, quoth he, 'Madam, I am, by my salvashion, a fery good shentleman, and near relation to his Majesty's Grash the Duke of Ormond; but being in want of money, and knowing you to be a sharitable w——, I hope you will give me shomething after I've took all you have away.' Honest Nell, seeing the simplicity of the fellow, and laughing heartily at his bull, gave him ten guineas, with which Teague rid away, without doing any further damage." †

Anecdotes of this sort, though perhaps only coloured with truth, are not to be made light of by biographers. They show the general appreciation at the time of the individuals to whom they relate. There is not a story told of Nelly in the commonest chap book or jest book, published while her memory was yet fresh among the children to whose fathers and mothers she was known, but what evinces either harmless humour or a sympathising heart. No wonder, then, that there is still an odd fascination about her name, and that Granger's sentence "Whatever she did became her"—is at least as worthy of credit as Burnet's in calling her "the indiscreetest and wildest creature that ever was in a court." ‡

The true apology for this Story and for Nell Gwyn is to be found in Cibber's defence of his own conduct, where, when speaking of Nelly, he observes: "If the common fame of her may be believed, which in my memory was not doubted, she

* Granger, iv. 210 and 188. "Like Oliver's porter, but not so devout," is a line in D'Urfey's Prologue to Sir Barnaby Whigg, 1681.

† Capt. Alexander Smith's Lives of Highwaymen, London, 1719, vol. i. p. 260.

‡ Burnet, i. 457, ed. 1823.

had less to be laid to her charge than any other of those ladies who were in the same state of preferment. She never meddled in matters of any serious moment, or was the tool of working politicians. Never broke into those amorous infidelities which others are accused of; but was as visibly distinguished by her particular personal inclination for the king as her rivals were by their titles and grandeur."*

Another, if another is wanting, may be found in a far graver author, Sir Thomas More. "I doubt not,"—says that great and good man,—"that some shall think *this woman* (he is writing of Jane Shore) too slight a thing to be written of and set among the remembrances of great matters; but meseemeth" he adds, "the chance worthy to be remembered—for, where the King took displeasure she would mitigate and appease his mind; where men were out of favour she would bring them in his grace; for many that had highly offended she obtained pardon; of great forfeitures she gat men remission; and finally, in many weighty suits she stood more in great stead."—Wise and virtuous Thomas More,—pious and manly Thomas Tenison,—pretty and witty—and surely with much that was good in her—ELEANOR GWYN. †

* Cibber's Apology, p. 450, ed. 1740.

Note.—I have great pleasure in extracting the following defence of Nelly from the preface to Douglas Jerrold's drama of "Nell Gwyn, or the Prologue," a capitally constructed piece, and one true throughout to its heroine and the manners of the age in which Nelly lived. "Whilst we may safely reject as unfounded gossip many of the stories associated with the name of Nell Gwyn, we cannot refuse belief to the various proofs of kind-heartedness, liberality, and—taking into consideration her subsequent power to do harm—absolute goodness of a woman mingling (if we may believe a passage in Pepys) from her earliest years in the most depraved scenes of a most dissolute age. The life of Nell Gwyn, from the time of her connexion with Charles II. to that of her death, proved that error had been forced upon her by circumstances, rather than indulged from choice. It was under this impression that the present little comedy was undertaken. under this conviction an attempt has been made to show some glimpses of the 'silver lining' of a character, to whose influence over an unprincipled voluptuary we owe a national asylum for veteran soldiers, and whose brightness shines with the most amiable lustre in many actions of her life, and in the last disposal of her worldly effects."

APPENDIX.

A.

ON THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH PORTION OF DE GRAMMONT'S MEMOIRS.

"EVERY thing has its place," was Walpole's remark to Pinkerton. "Lord Hailes, who is very accurate himself, observed to me that the chronology of the *Memoirs de Grammont* is not exact. What has that book to do with chronology?"* Mr. Hallam has said something very similar to this, "The *Memoirs of Grammont*, by Anthony Hamilton, scarcely challenge a place as historical. Every one is aware of the peculiar felicity and fascinating gaiety which they display."†

Differing (unwillingly) from Walpole and Hallam in the value they would appear to attach to chronological exactness, in works like De Grammont, and deeming chronology certainly of some, though of minor importance, let us see what can be done in reducing the facts into an historical order of time. I shall confine what I have to say to the English portion of the work—by far the largest part of the book, and unquestionably the most important. The author, it must be observed, sets out by informing us that he has no intention of observing chronological exactness:—

"I farther declare, that order of the time and disposition of the facts, which give more trouble to the writer than pleasure to the reader, shall not

* Walpoliana, vol. ii. p. 31.

† Hallam, Hist. of Lit., vol. iv. p. 604.

much embarrass me in these Memoirs. It being my design to convey a just idea of my hero, those circumstances which most tend to illustrate and distinguish his character, shall find a place in these fragments just as they present themselves to the imagination, without paying any particular attention to their arrangement. For after all, what does it signify where the portrait is begun, provided the assemblage of parts form a whole, which expresses the original?"

This is all very excellent; but readers like myself have been long accustomed to invest these entertaining *Memoirs* with something of the character of history; and if we can show, in spite of a few chronological excesses, that the events in the book may be brought within a very short compass of years—seven at the most—that their accuracy may be supported, if not by a "cloud of witnesses," by the unquestionable evidences of one or more admitted authorities; surely the book must rise in value, and even in the interest which it gives the reader: for, take it up in what sense we will, as an episode in History, or as a book somewhat akin to *Kenilworth* or *Ivanhoe*, the nearer it approaches to truth it becomes invested with additional interest, and may be made to take its place either on the shelf of history or the shelf of fiction, as the fancy or the inclination of the reader may choose to place it.

Sir William Musgrave, the great print-collector, had paid considerable attention to the chronology of the De Grammont *Memoirs*. "From many circumstances," he says, "the events mentioned in these *Memoirs* appear to have happened between the years 1663 and 1665." But this is evidently too restricted; and I shall now endeavour to show that the several events may, with very few exceptions, be confined to the period of De Grammont's residence in England, from May 1662 to October 1669.

The author has divided his work into *eleven* very unequal chapters. The first five relate only Continental adventures; and the last six, by far the largest part of the work, are con-

fined to the Count's adventures and amours in the court of Charles II. The author is very particular, it will be seen, in the period of the Count's arrival. "The Chevalier de Grammont arrived about two years after the Restoration." . . . . "It was in the height of the rejoicings they were making for this new queen [Catherine of Braganza] that the Chevalier de Grammont arrived, to contribute to its magnificence and diversions." Now Catherine landed at Portsmouth on the 14th May, 1662, and on the 21st of the same month was married at Portsmouth to King Charles II. On the 29th, the bridegroom and bride arrived at Hampton Court; and on the 2nd June the lord-mayor and aldermen made their addresses to the queen at Whitehall, "and did present her with a gold cup, £1000 in gold therein." The court therefore arrived in London about June or July, 1662.

The event of the Count's arrival is related in Chapter VI., the earliest English chapter of the book; and the only other occurrence mentioned in the same division, is the duel between young Harry Jermyn and Giles Rawlins. This was in August 1662, Pepys describing the duel under the 19th of that month and year.

Chapter VII., like Chapter VI., has only two events to attract the chronological student—the splendid masquerade given by the queen at which Lady Muskerry appeared in the Babylonian dress; and the period "when the queen was given over by her physicians." Editors hitherto have only helped us to the latter of the two events; but the former is of far more importance. A masquerade at court was too great an occurrence to escape either Evelyn or Pepys.

"2 *Feb.* 1664-5.—I saw a masq; perform'd at Court by 6 gentlemen and 6 ladies, surpassing his Ma^ty, it being Candleman-day."—Evelyn.

"3 *Feb.* 1664-5.—Mrs. Pickering did at my Lady Sandwich's command tell me the manner of a masquerade before the king and court the other day

Where six women (my Lady Castlemaine and Duchess of Monmouth being two of them), and six men (the Duke of Monmouth, and Lord Avon, and Monsieur Blanfort, being three of them) in vizards, but most rich and antique dresses, did dance admirably and most gloriously."—PEPYS.

The queen was given over by the physicians in October 1663, when she was so ill that her head was shaved, and pigeons put to her feet.

The events in Chapter VIII., to which in this investigation it is necessary to allude, are, *first*, the audience of the Muscovite ambassadors; *second*, the period when Lady Chesterfield was packed from Whitehall to Bretby in Derbyshire; *third*, the period when Margaret Brook was married to Sir John Denham. "The Earl of Chesterfield was informed," says Hamilton, "that he was to attend the Queen at an audience she gave to seven or eight Muscovite ambassadors." Now when was this? Let us see what Pepys and Evelyn can do for us in this emergency:—

"29 *Dec.*, 1662.—Saw the audience of the Muscovite Ambass which was with extraordinary state, his retinue being numerous, all clad in vests of several colours, with buskins after y^e^ Eastern manners: their caps of furr; tunicks richly embrodred with gold and pearls made a glorious show."—EVELYN.

"5 *Jany.* 1662–3.—To the King's Chamber, whither by and by the Russian Ambassadors come."—PEPYS.

The arrival of the Muscovite ambassadors, though not the particular audience, thus satisfactorily settled, the next event in the same chapter is the period when the Countess of Chesterfield (the heroine of the *Memoirs*) was sent into the country by her jealous-pated husband, as the wits and gallants of the court chose to call a courageous earl, unwilling to wink at the dishonour of his wife. The cause of the Countess of Chesterfield's retirement was her open and very indiscreet conduct with the Duke of York.

"3 *Nov.* 1662.—He [Pierce] tells me how the Duke of York is smitten in love with my Lady Chesterfield; and so much that the Duchess of York hath complained to the King and her father about it, and my Lady Chesterfield is gone into the country for it."—PEPYS.

This was, perhaps, only a temporary banishment; for if Hamilton's narrative is correct, and there is no reason to doubt its accuracy in this matter, she was certainly in town when the Muscovite ambassador had his audience of the queen, nearly two months after the period assigned by Pepys. But this was too interesting an event to be concise upon. Pepys has more to say:—

"19 *Jany.* 1662-3.—This day, by Dr. Clarke, I was told the occasion of my Lord Chesterfield's going and taking his lady (my Lord Ormond's daughter) from court. It seems he not only hath been long jealous of the Duke of York, but did find them two talking together, though there were others in the room, and the lady by all opinions a most good virtuous woman. He the next day (of which the Duke was warned by somebody that saw the passion my Lord Chesterfield was in the night before) went and told the Duke how much he did apprehend himself wronged, in his picking out his lady of the whole court to be the subject of his dishonour; which the Duke did answer with great calmnesse, not seeming to understand the reason of complaint, and that was all that passed; but my lord did presently pack his lady into the country in Derbyshire near the Peake; which is become a proverb at court, to send a man's wife to the Peake when she vexes him."—PEPYS.

It appears from the books of the Lord Steward's office, to which I have had access, that Lord Chesterfield set out for the country on the 12th May, 1663; and from his "Short Notes," referred to in the *Memoirs* before his Correspondence, that he remained at Bretby in Derbyshire with his wife throughout the summer of that year.

None of the biographers of Sir John Denham tell us when his second marriage took place. But we must not look to printed books for every kind of information. We must extend our inquiries further, and may sometimes do so with success.

Denham's marriage to Margaret Brook is recorded in the register of Westminster Abbey, under the 25th of May, 1665. Poor Miss Brook! She was cold in her grave, like Lady Chesterfield, before De Grammont had married Miss Hamilton, or the period I am seeking to assign to these *Memoirs* had well-nigh closed.

The death of Lady Denham, mentioned in Chapter IX., took place 6th January, 1666–7:* still within the limit I have named.

The same chapter contains Miss Hobart's celebrated sketch of the principal persons at court: "to the best," she says, "of my knowledge, without injury to any one, for I abominate the trade of scandal." Of Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Miss Hobart observes—she is addressing Miss Temple:—

* Hamilton accuses the poet of making away with his wife. "The precedent of Lord Chesterfield was not," he says, "sufficiently bitter for the revenge he meditated; besides, he had no country-house to which he could carry his unfortunate wife. This being the case, the old villain made her travel a much longer journey without stirring out of London." Pepys mentions her death:—

"7 *Jany.* 1666–7.—Lord Brouncker tells me that my Lady Denham is at last dead. Some suspect her poisoned, but it will be best known when her body is opened to-day, she dying yesterday morning. The Duke of York is troubled for her, but hath declared he will never have another public mistress again, which I shall be glad of, and would the King would do the like."—Pepys.

The lampoons of the day, some of which are to be found in Andrew Marvell's works, more than insinuated that she was deprived of life by a mixture infused into some chocolate. She "was poisoned," says Aubrey, "by the hands of the co. of Roc. with chocolatte."* I cannot imagine for a moment to whom Aubrey alludes; not the Countess of Rochester, surely, for there was no Countess of Rochester at the time. *A Key to Count Grammont's Memoirs* (8vo, 1715) says that "the Duchess of York was strongly suspected of having poisoned her with powder of diamonds." But the question is, was she poisoned? Her body was opened, *and at her own desire*, but no sign of poison found. This curious piece of information, hitherto overlooked by all who have written on the subject, is contained in a letter from Lord Orrery to the Duke of Ormond, dated Charleville, January 25, 1666–7. His Lordship's words are, "My Lady Denham's body, at her own desire, was opened, but no sign of poison found."†

* *Letters*, &c. vol. ii. p. 319.

† Orrery State Papers, fol. 1742, p. 219.

"The Earl of Oxford fell in love with a handsome, graceful actress, belonging to the Duke's Theatre, who performed to perfection, particularly the part of Roxana, in a very fashionable new play, insomuch that she ever after retained that name. This creature being both very virtuous and very modest, or, if you please, wonderfully obstinate, proudly rejected the addresses and presents of the Earl of Oxford. This resistance inflamed his passion; he had recourse to invectives, and even to spells, but all in vain. This disappointment had such effect upon him, that he could neither eat nor drink; this did not signify to him; but his passion at length became so violent, that he could not neither play nor smoke. In this extremity, Love had recourse to Hymen. The Earl of Oxford, one of the first peers of the realm, is, you know, a very handsome man; he is of the Order of the Garter, which greatly adds to an air naturally noble. In short, from his outward appearance you would suppose he was really possessed of some sense; but as soon as ever you hear him speak, you are perfectly convinced of the contrary. This passionate lover presented her with a promise of marriage, in due form, signed with his own hand; she would not, however, rely upon this, but the next day she thought there would be no danger, when the earl himself came to her lodgings attended by a clergyman, and another man for a witness. The marriage was accordingly solemnised with all due ceremonies, in the presence of one of her fellow-players, who attended as a witness on her part. You will suppose, perhaps, that the new countess had nothing to do but appear at court according to her rank, and to display the earl's arms upon her carriage. This was far from being the case. When examination was made concerning the marriage, it was found to be a mere deception: it appeared that the pretended priest was one of my lord's trumpeters, and the witness his kettle-drummer. The parson and his companion never appeared after the ceremony was over; and as for the other witnesses, they endeavoured to persuade her that the Sultana Roxana might have supposed, in some part or other of a play, that she was really married. It was all to no purpose that the poor creature claimed the protection of the laws of God and man, both which were violated and abused, as well as herself, by this infamous imposition. In vain did she throw herself at the king's feet to demand justice: she had only to rise up again without redress; and happy might she think herself to receive an annuity of 1000 crowns, and to resume the name of Roxana, instead of Countess of Oxford."

Here is a good deal of confusion, to which further confusion has been added by the annotators. Roxana is a character in Lee's *Rival Queens;* but the *Rival Queens* was brought out at

the King's Theatre, not the Duke's; and the actress seduced by the Earl of Oxford belonged, Hamilton tells us, to the Duke's Theatre. We are assured by the annotators, that the actress thus seduced was Mrs. Marshall, who acted Roxana in Lee's *Rival Queens*; but Malone had disposed of this belief in a note to one of Dryden's Letters; and it is very curious how Scott, who had Malone's edition of Dryden pretty well by heart, should have missed it when he was seeing his edition of De Grammont through the press. After disposing of Mrs. Marshall's claim, Malone makes a very near guess when he names Mrs. Frances Davenport instead:—

"The person seduced probably was Mrs. Frances Davenport, an eminent actress in the Duke of York's company, who was celebrated for her performance of Roxolana in Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes*, 1662, and in another Roxolana in Lord Orrery's *Mustapha* in 1665. She acted in Dryden's *Maiden Queen* in 1668, but her name is not found in any of the plays performed by the Duke of York's servants after they removed to Dorset Gardens in 1671; and Downes, the prompter of that playhouse, mentions it in his quaint language, that she was before that time 'by force of love crept from the stage.'"

The editor of the last English edition* has had some idea glimmering in his mind that Roxolana, and not Roxana, was the lady seduced by the founder of the regiment still distinguished from his colonelcy as the *Oxford* Blues. He inserts, without remark, the following extract from Evelyn:—

"9 *Jan.* 1661-2.—I saw the third part of the *Siege of Rhodes*. In this acted y^e^ faire and famous comedian, called Roxolana, from y^e^ part she perform'd; and I think it was the last, she being taken to be the Earl of Oxford's *misse*, as at that time they began to call lewd women."

To this I must add that Pepys, as usual, comes in to support the accuracy of his friend and fellow memorialist:—

* That of Bohn in 1846

"18 *Feb.* 1661-2.—To the Opera and saw *The Law against Lovers*, a good play and well performed, especially the little girls (whom I never saw act before) dancing and singing; and were it not for her, the loss of Roxolana would spoil the house.

"2 *April*, 1662.—To the Opera and there saw *The Bondman* most excellently acted . . . Ianthe acting Cleron's part very well now Roxolana is gone."

"19 *May*, 1662.—To the Opera, and there saw the second part of the *Siege of Rhodes*, but it is not so well done as when Roxolana was there, who, it is said, is now owned by my Lord of Oxford."

"27 *Dec.* 1662.—With my wife to the Duke's Theatre, and saw the second part of *Rhodes* done with the new Roxolana; which do it rather better in all respects for person, voice, and judgment, than the first Roxolana."

The new Roxolana was Mrs. Betterton; the old Roxolana, "Lord Oxford's misse," either Frances or Elizabeth Davenport; for there were two sisters of that name on the stage of the Duke's Theatre at this time. I suspect, however, that the old Roxolana was the younger sister, Betty. The elder was on the stage in 1668:—

"7 *April*, 1668.—The eldest Davenport is, it seems, gone to be kept by somebody, which I am glad of, she being a very bad actor."—PEPYS.

Now it appears from Lilly's *Nativities* in the Ashmolean Museum, that the Earl of Oxford's son by Roxolana was born 17th April, 1664, and Roxolana herself 3rd March, 1642. Whenever a new edition of De Grammont is again required (and a new one is very much needed), I hope to see no more confusion in this matter.*

Chapter X. of the *Memoirs* is equally true to the chronology of history. Here we have the story of Lord Rochester's residence as a German doctor in Tower Street, and that famous adventure of Miss Jennings and Miss Price disguised as orange-

* I may add, that the next editor will do well to refer to Malone's note about the age of the Earl of Oxford, proving from indisputable evidence that Lord Oxford was seventy-five instead of being, as the annotators inform us, upwards of eighty at his death.

girls. No one has told us when Rochester assumed the part of Alexander Bendo, and issued his bill detailing what he had done and what he could do; but there is reason to believe that it was before the 26th May, 1665, when he ran off with the heiress he subsequently married. Rochester was at the attack on Bergen, on the 2nd August, 1665, at the great fight at sea in 1666, and married to Elizabeth Mallet, "the melancholy heiress," as Hamilton calls her, before the 4th February, 1666–7, when Pepys records his seeing them at court as man and wife. Hamilton connects the two events,—Rochester's City residence, and Miss Jennings and Miss Price's disguise as orange-girls. Pepys is silent about the German doctor, but Miss Jennings' adventure did not escape him:—

"21 *Feb.* 1664–5.—My Lady Sandwich tells me what mad freaks the mayds of honour at court have: that Mrs. Jennings, one of the Duchesse's maids, the other day dressed herself like an orange wench, and went up and down and cried oranges; till falling down, or by some accident, her fine shoes were discerned, and she put to a great deal of shame."

Hamilton's description is in keeping with the narrative in Pepys:—

"He [Brouncker] was, however, surprised to see them have much better shoes and stockings than women of that rank generally wear, and that the little orange-girl, in getting out of a very high coach, showed one of the handsomest legs he had ever seen."

Miss Jennings was not very likely to have made a second disguise of this description, so that we may assume fairly enough that Pepys and Hamilton record the same adventure. It deserves to be remembered that this Miss Jennings was afterwards the reduced Duchess of Tyrconnel, who sat at the New Exchange and played the part of the "White Milliner," an adventure still more notorious than her trip to the German, Alexander Bendo.

The visit of the Court to Tunbridge Wells, also described in Chapter X., must have taken place before the 3rd June, 1665, because Lord Muskerry, who was killed in the action of 3rd June, 1665, attended the Court on that occasion with his wife, the celebrated Babylonian Princess of the *Memoirs*. The Court was at Tunbridge in July, 1663, and again in July, 1666. Hamilton has confounded, I fancy, the two visits. Lord Muskerry and Nell Gwyn, he says, were both present. Now Lord Muskerry was dead before the second visit, and Nell was unknown when the first took place. Another historical event referred to in this chapter was the visit of the Duke of York to the city whose name he bore. This took place in August, 1665. A third is the death of Edward Montagu before Bergen, 2nd August, 1665; a fourth, the Duchess of York's amour with Henry Sydney, discovered while the Court was at York in August, 1665;* and a fifth, the commencement of the Duke's partiality for Arabella Churchill, another consequence of his visit to the north.

In the same chapter we are told that Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, made love (love, shall we call it?) to a niece of one of the Mothers of the Maids. Her name is not given: she is only called Miss Sarah. She had some disposition, it is said, for the stage; and Hamilton tells us, that after Lord Rochester "had entertained both the niece and the aunt for some months in the country, he got her entered in the king's company of

* There cannot, I think, be any doubt of the intrigue of the Duchess of York (Anne Hyde) with Harry Sidney, afterwards Earl of Romney, brother of Algernon Sidney and of Waller's Sacharissa. See on what testimony it rests. Hamilton more than hints at it; Burnet is very pointed about it in his History; Reresby just mentions and Pepys refers to it in three distinct entries and on three different authorities. But the evidence is not yet at an end. "How could the Duke of York make my mother a papist?" said the Princess Mary to Dr. Burnet. "The Duke caught a man in bed with her," said the Doctor, "and then had power to make her do anything." The Prince, who sat by the fire, said "Pray, Madam, ask the Doctor a few more questions." Spence's Anecdotes, ed. Singer, p. 329.

comedians the next winter; and the public was obliged to him for the prettiest, but at the same time the worst actress in the kingdom." This, the annotators tell us, was Mrs. Barry—"famous Mrs. Barry," as she was called; and we have a long, rambling, incorrect history of the lady in consequence. Surely, however, the description is not at all applicable to Mrs. Barry, who was so far from being the prettiest and the worst actress, that she was the ugliest and the best. Look at her portrait at Hampton Court in Kneller's large picture of King William on horseback! She was anything but pretty. "And yet this fine creature," says Tony Aston, "was not handsome, her mouth opening most on the right side, which she strove to draw in t'other way."—a very indifferent account of the "prettiest actress."

But let us come to dates. When was Mrs. Barry born? She departed this life, her monument at Acton tells us, on the 7th of November, 1713, aged fifty-five years. She was, consequently, born in 1658, and was only *eleven* years old in 1669, the date of the last event related in the De Grammont *Memoirs*. Now Mrs. Barry came first upon the stage, there is every reason to believe, in 1674;* and the events in the De Grammont *Memoirs* may all be said to have taken place (as I have shown) prior to October, 1669. Mrs. Barry's name was Elizabeth, *not* Sarah. "Miss Sarah" therefore was not Mrs. Barry. Who, then, was she? Unquestionably Sarah Cooke, an actress at the King's House, who spoke the prologue on the first night of Rochester's *Valentinian*, and the new prologue on the second night. She seems to have been but an indifferent actress, and her parts were generally restricted to prologues and epilogues. She is mentioned in the *State Poems*;† by Dryden in a letter to Tonson;‡ and by Sir

* Genest's History of the Stage, i. 157. † State Poems, 8vo. 1703, p. 136.
‡ Malone, ii. p. 24.

George Etherege, not very decently, in a MS. letter now before me.* Count Hamilton is not inexact in his chronology: it is his annotators who are wrong.

The *eleventh* and last chapter preserves the same historical consistency to the seven years over which the events recorded in the *Memoirs* may safely be confined;—the marriage of the Duke of Monmouth (20th April, 1663); the visit of the Court to Bristol in September, 1663; the birth of Henry Fitzroy, Earl of Euston and Duke of Grafton (20th September, 1663); the return of the Court to London (2nd October, 1663); the mention of the fitting out of the Guinea fleet in August, 1664; the expedition against Gigery in October, 1664; the marriage of La Belle Stuart in March, 1667; the duel of the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Shrewsbury (16th January, 1667–8); Lord Buckhurst's carrying off Nell Gwyn in July, 1667; the attack on Henry Killigrew, 18th May, 1669; and the marriage of Count Grammont to Elizabeth Hamilton in 1668. Here the *Memoirs* end, De Grammont returning to France with his wife and family in October, 1669.

I have thus reduced a book which, as Walpole says, has really nothing to do with chronology, into something like chronological exactness. A few events, however, still remain unnoticed,—such as the creation of the Countess of Castlemaine to be Duchess of Cleveland, somewhat antedated in the *Memoirs*, for the creation did not take place till the 3rd August, 1670; the intrigue of the Duchess with Colonel Churchill apparently placed some seven or eight years beforehand; the letter to Lord Cornwallis about his father-in-law, Sir Stephen Fox, which could scarcely have been written before the 27th December, 1673, when Lord Cornwallis married Sir Stephen Fox's daughter, and the reference in the last page but one to the publication of Ovid's *Epistles*, "translated into English verse

* Addit. MSS. in British Museum, No. 11,513.

by the greatest wits at Court;" when it is known that the earliest printed edition of Ovid's *Epistles* in English verse was published in 1680, sixteen years too late to have suggested to Miss Jennings her parody on the "Epistle of Ariadne to Theseus," addressed to the perfidious Jermyn, and containing a description of the perils and monsters that awaited him in Guinea. Perhaps, after all, no reference whatever was intended to a printed edition; and that the word published must be taken in its ordinary sense of *circulated*, though now commonly applied to what is *printed*:—and this, I see every reason to think, was the case.

The Count de Grammont, who died on the 30th January, 1707, is said to have dictated these *Memoirs* to his vivacious brother-in-law. "I only hold the pen," says Hamilton, "while he directs it to the most remarkable and secret passages of his life." This is in Chapter I.; in the eleventh and last chapter he says, "We profess to insert nothing in these *Memoirs* but what we have heard from the mouth of him whose actions and sayings we transmit to posterity." And a little farther on the same page he observes, "For my own part I should never have thought that the attention of the Count de Grammont, which is at present so sensible to inconveniences and dangers, would have ever permitted him to entertain amorous thoughts upon the road, if he did not himself dictate to me what I am now writing." No one has thought for a moment that De Grammont, was, in point of fact, the author of the *Memoirs* which bear his name. His excellence as a man of wit was entirely limited to conversation. He is said, however, to have sold the MS. for 1500 livres; and it is added that when the MS. was brought to Fontenelle, then censor of the press, he refused to license it on account of the scandalous conduct imputed to the Court in a party at quinze, described in the third chapter.

It is a somewhat singular omission on the part of all the

English editors and annotators of De Grammont, that they do not tell us when the first edition of the *Memoirs* appeared. If the book was printed in De Grammont's lifetime, which the story of the license granted by Fontenelle to the Count himself certainly supposes, there must have been an edition before 1707, the year in which the Count died; whereas the earliest edition described by Watt, and, what is more, the earliest edition preserved in the British Museum, is an edition in 12mo., printed at Cologne in 1713. I am inclined to think that there is no edition of a prior date;* and for this reason, that, had the book been published in the Count's lifetime, we should have had an English translation of it before that of Boyer in 1714, unquestionably the earliest English translation of the work. I was once willing to think that the publication had been withheld to that year from motives of delicacy towards many mentioned in the work, who were still alive. For instance, the Earl of Chesterfield, who makes so conspicuous a figure in the work, and Progers, another person not very delicately referred to, were both removed by death in 1713, the year in which the first edition was published. But this supposition is, I have since found, of very little value, for when the first English translation appeared, eight different persons particularly referred to in the work were still alive: Sir Stephen Fox and Sir Charles Lyttelton, both of whom died in 1716; Lady Lyttelton (Miss Temple that was), who died in 1718; the great Duke of Marlborough, who died in 1722; Mrs. Godfrey (Arabella Churchill) and Mademoiselle de la Garde, both of whom died in 1730; the Duchess of Tyrconnell (Frances Jennings), who died in 1731; and the Duchess of Buccleuch (the widow of Monmouth and the Earl of Cornwallis), the last survivor of Hamilton's heroes and heroines, who died on the 6th of February, 1731–2, in the eighty-first year of her age. To three

* Mr. Bolton Corney is also of this opinion (*Notes and Queries*, vol. iv. p. 261).

ladies, Jennings, Temple, and Arabella Churchill, the *Memoirs of de Grammont* must have been a very unwelcome publication; and any delicacy that existed towards Lord Chesterfield must have been felt in a much stronger degree for the ladies who were still alive to remember and regret the follies and frailties of their youth. It is almost unnecessary to add, that the work attracted a great deal of attention at the time,—so much attention, indeed, that a tract, price two-pence, was published in 1715, called, *A Key to Count Grammont's Memoirs*, and Boyer's bald translation of the book was reprinted in 1719. If a "key" was necessary then, still more necessary is it now, for very few books stand so much in need of historical illustration.

B.

SOME ACCOUNT OF HAMILTON, HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

"The beauties at Windsor," says Walpole, "are the Court of Paphos, and ought to be engraved for the Memoirs of its charming historiographer, Count Hamilton." If the reader is of Walpole's way of thinking, how much more necessary is it that something should be said about "the charming historiographer" himself!

Anthony Hamilton (who never appears himself in any part of his work) was the third son of the Honourable Sir George Hamilton, by Mary Butler, third daughter of Walter, Viscount Thurles, eldest son of Walter, eleventh Earl of Ormond. His father, who died in 1667, leaving six sons and three daughters, was the fourth son of James, first Earl of Abercorn. His mother died in August, 1680, as appears from an interesting and affect-

ing letter of her brother, the great Duke of Ormond, dated Carrick, August 25, in that year.

Of the *six* sons of the Honourable Sir George Hamilton, JAMES, the eldest, was groom of the bedchamber and colonel of a regiment of foot to Charles II. I can find no earlier mention of him than the following passage in a letter from Edward Savage to Sancroft, then Dean of St. Paul's, and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. The letter is dated, "From the Cockpit at Whitehall, 25 October, 1664," and the passage is as follows:—"Mr. O'Neale, of Bedchamber, dyed yesterday, very rich, and left his old lady all. Mr. James Hamilton, the Duke of Ormond's nephew, shall have his groome of the Bedchamber's place, and Sir William Blakestone his Troop of Horse."* Savage was right in his intelligence; Hamilton received the appointment. But this was not the first time the king had shown a friendly feeling towards him. He had previously interested himself in obtaining for him the hand in marriage of Elizabeth Colepepper, eldest daughter of John, Lord Colepepper, of Thoresway, but it is uncertain when the marriage took place. Wood, in his edition of *Douglas's Peerage*, puts it under 1661, a year, I think, at least, too late; the parish register of St. Margaret's, Westminster, recording the baptism of George, their second son, on the 18th March, 1662–3. Nor did the king's regard for James Hamilton cease with the Bedchamber appointment. By a privy seal of the 29th November, 1671 (Harl. MS. 7344) he made him ranger of Hyde Park, from which appointment Hamilton Place, Piccadilly, derives its name. By letters patent of the 15th May, 1672, he granted him a pension of 850*l.* per annum; but this he did not live very long to enjoy. In the engagement against the Dutch, 4th June, 1673, he had one of his legs taken off by a cannon-ball, and dying on the 6th, was

* Harl. MS. 1785.

buried next day, as the register records, in Westminster Abbey.

"1673, Coll. Hamilton, rec^{d} his death wound in y^{e} engagem^{t} agst y^{e} Dutch, was b^{d} w^{thin} y^{e} north mon^{t} door, June 7."

It deserves to be told, to the credit of the king, that he was not forgetful of the widow and children of James Hamilton. I have letters patent before me, dated 20th July, 1673, granting a yearly pension of 850*l.* to Mrs. Hamilton, in trust for her three sons, and a yearly pension of 500*l.* for herself. Mrs. Hamilton died in 1709, aged seventy-two. Of her three sons, James, the eldest, was sixth Earl of Abercorn; George, the second, was killed at the battle of Steinkirk, in 1692; and William, the youngest, settled at Bocton Place, near Lenham, in Kent, and acquired a large property there.* And this is all I have been able to discover of the elder brother, the handsome James Hamilton, the hero of the celebrated adventure at Bretby, *with*, or rather *without*, the Countess of Chesterfield. His portrait was at the Marquis of Abercorn's, at Stanmore, but, I suppose, was sold with the rest of the Stanmore pictures, at Christie and Manson's, a few years back.

George, the *second* son of Sir George and Lady Hamilton, married "the lovely Jennings;"—Frances Jennings, elder daughter and coheir of Richard Jennings, of Sandridge, in Hertfordshire, and sister of Sarah Jennings, the celebrated Duchess of Marlborough. He had three daughters (his elder brother had three sons), all nobly married: Elizabeth to Richard, Viscount Ross;† Frances to Henry, Viscount Dillon; and Mary to Nicholas, Viscount Kingsland. The king, by a war-

* They would appear to have had another son, who probably died young:—

4 Nov. 1664.—John Hambleton, S. to James Hambleton, Esq., by Dame Eliz. his wife.—*Baptismal Register of St. Margaret's, Westminster.*

† 21 March, 1666–7, Eliz. Hambleton, d. to George, Esq., by Frances.—*Baptismal Register of St. Margaret's, Westminster.*

rant before me, dated 20th April, 1666, granted him a pension of 500*l.* a-year, "the better to enable him to support himself and family." He is there called "George Hamilton, Esq., Lieutenant of our troop of Guards." He was in love with Miss Stewart, and a most amusing account of the doings in her chamber is put into his mouth by his brother Anthony. This is the Hamilton who served in the French army with distinction. I know not when he died. Evelyn, however, is of some assistance in determining the time. "12 *November*, 1675. There was in my lady ambassadress's company my Lady Hamilton, a sprightly young lady, much in the good graces of the family, wife of that valiant and worthy gentleman, George Hamilton, not long after slaine in the warrs. She had been a maid of honour to the Dutchesse, and now turn'd Papist." His widow married *Tall* Talbot, afterwards Earl and Duke of Tyrconnell (d. 1691), the hero of the famous Lillibullero ballad, and dying in Dublin, 6th March, 1731, was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Anthony, "the charming historiographer," was the *third* son. He is said to have been born at Roscrea, in the county of Tipperary, in 1646, in which year Owen O'Neale took Roscrea, and, as Carte says, "put man, and woman, and child, to the sword, except Sir George Hamilton's lady, sister to the Marquis of Ormond, and some few gentlewomen whom he kept prisoners." His father and mother were Roman Catholics; Anthony therefore was bred in the religion to which he adhered conscientiously through life. He was twenty-two years old when his sister, La Belle Hamilton, married the Count de Grammont; about which time he went abroad, and, unable as a Roman Catholic to find employment at home, entered the army of Louis XIV. "He distinguished himself," it is said, "in his profession, and was advanced to considerable posts in the French service." When James II. succeeded to the throne,

and the door of preferment was open to Roman Catholics, Anthony Hamilton entered the Irish army, where we find him, in 1680, a lieutenant-colonel in Sir Thomas Newcomen's regiment. Other appointments were in store for him, and he was subsequently constituted governor of Limerick, colonel of a regiment, and a privy councillor. Lord Clarendon, the son of the Chancellor, and then lord-lieutenant of Ireland, was very kind to him at this time. He speaks of him in several of his letters. "If Lieutenant-colonel Anthony Hamilton may be believed, and I take him to be the best of that sort." "If Lieutenant-colonel Hamilton may be believed, who understands the regiment better than the colonel, for he makes it his business." And to his brother, Lord Rochester, he writes, "He is a very worthy man, and of great honour, and will retain a just sense of any kindness you may do him. He has been in very good employment and esteem when he served abroad, and men of honour cannot always brook the having little men put over their heads, who, in the judgment of all the world, are not equal to their stations."*

After the total overthrow of James's affairs in Ireland, he retired to St. Germain, acquired the confidence of the Duke and Duchess of Berwick (the Duke was King James's son by Arabella Churchill), cultivated his taste for poetry, wrote one or two agreeable novels, translated Pope's *Essay on Criticism* into French, carried on a correspondence with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in the name of his niece, the Countess of Stafford; and having sent his *Mémoires de Grammont* to the press, died at St. Germain, 21st April, 1720, aged about seventy-four.†

Thomas, the *fourth* son, was bred to the sea service, became

* See Clarendon's Diary and Correspondence, by Singer, pp. 421, 423, 553.

† For the fate of Mr. Hamilton's Correspondence with Mr. Le Poer, see Preface to "Hanmer Papers," p. vii.

captain of a ship of war, and died in New England. RICHARD, the *fifth* son, was a brigadier-general in King James's army in Ireland, and a lieutenant-general in the French service. He led King James's cavalry at the Battle of the Boyne, and died in France. JOHN, the *sixth* and youngest son, was a colonel in King James's army, and was killed at the battle of Aghrim in Ireland, in 1691.

Of the six sons of Sir George and Lady Hamilton, three were killed in action, one died in New England, and two in France. Of the three daughters, Elizabeth, the eldest, the only one of whom anything is known, was married to the Count de Grammont, by whom she also had three daughters. She was Anthony's senior by five years, and was twenty-seven years old when married. The Count was forty-seven. One of their three daughters was the Countess of Stafford, described by Lord Hervey in his Memoirs, as "an old French lady, daughter of the famous Count de Grammont, who had as much wit, humour, and entertainment in her as any man or woman I ever knew, with a great justness in her way of thinking, and very little reserve in her manner of giving her opinion of things and people." *

* Lord Hervey's Memoirs ii. 116.

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About the book
This book, published in 1883 recounts the life of Nell Gwyn. Born in 1650, Nell acted on the famous Drury Lane Theater in many of Dryden's plays. However she is also famous for being Charles II's mistress and having two children with him.

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